A Woman Ventures

David Graham Phillips

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EMILY.

A WOMAN VENTURES

A NOVEL

BY

DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

AUTHOR OF
THE FASHIONABLE ADVENTURES OF
JOSHUA CRAIG, THE HUSBAND'S STORY, ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
WILLIAM JAMES HURLBUT

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A Woman Ventures.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHIPWRECK.

WENTWORTH Bromfield was mourned by his widow and daughter with a depth that would have amazed him.

For twenty-one years he had been an assistant secretary in the Department of State at Washington—a rather conspicuous position, with a salary of four thousand a year. Influential relatives representing Massachusetts in the House or in the Senate, and often in both, had enabled him to persist through changes of administration and of party control, and to prevail against the "pull" of many an unplaced patriot. Perhaps he might have been a person of consequence had he exercised his talents in some less insidiously lazy occupation. He had begun well at the law; but in return for valuable local services to the party, he got the offer of this political office, and, in what he came to regard as a fatal moment, he accepted it. His wife—he had just married—said that he was "going in for a diplomatic career." He faintly hoped so himself, but the warnings of his common sense were

soon verified. "Diplomatic career" proved to be a sonorous name for a decent burial of energy and prospects.

He had drawn his salary year after year. He had gone languidly through his brief daily routine at the Department. He had been mildly fluttered at each Presidential election, and again after each inauguration. He had indulged in futile impulses to self-resurrection, in severe attacks of despondency. Then, at thirty-seven, he had grasped the truth—that he would remain an assistant secretary to the end of his days. Thenceforth aspirations and depressions had ceased, and his life had set to a cynical sourness. He read, he sneered, he ate, and slept.

The Bromfields had a small additional income—Mrs. Bromfield's twelve hundred a year from her father's estate. This was most important, as it represented a margin above comfort and necessity, a margin for luxury and for temptation to extravagance. Mr. Bromfield was fond of good dinners and good wines, and he could not enjoy them at the expense of his friends without an occasional return. Mrs. Bromfield had been an invalid after the birth of Emily, long enough to form the habit of invalidism. After Emily passed the period when dress is not a serious item, they went ever more deeply into debt.

While Mrs. Bromfield's craze for doctors and drugs was in one view as much an extravagance as Mr. Bromfield's club, in another view it was a valuable economy. It made entertaining impossible; it

enabled Emily to go everywhere without the necessity for return hospitalities, and to "keep up appearances" generally. Many of their friends gave Mrs. Bromfield undeserved credit for shrewdness and calculation in her hypochondria.

Emily had admirers, and, in her first season, one fairly good chance to marry. The matchmakers who were interested in her—"for her mother's sake," they said, but in fact from the matchmaking mania, —were exasperated by her refusal. They remonstrated with her mother in vain.

"I know, I know," sighed Mrs. Bromfield. "But what can I do? Emily is so headstrong and I am in such feeble health. I am forbidden the agitation of a discussion. I've told Emily that a girl without money, and with nothing but family, must be careful. But she won't listen to me."

Mrs. Ainslie, the most genuinely friendly of all the women who insured their own welcome by chaperoning a clever, pretty, popular girl, pressed the matter upon Emily with what seemed to her an impertinence to be resented.

"Don't be offended, child," said Mrs. Ainslie, replying to Emily's haughty coldness. "You ought to thank me. I only hope you will never regret it. A girl without a dot can't afford to trifle. A second season is dangerous, especially here in Washington, where they bring the babies out of the nursery to marry them off."

"Why, you yourself used to call Bob Fulton one of nature's poor jokes," Emily retorted. "You

overlooked these wonderful good qualities in him until he began to annoy me."

"Sarcasm does not change the facts." Mrs. Ainslie was irritated in her even-tempered, indifferent fashion. "You think you'll wait and look about you. But let me tell you, my dear, precious few girls, even the most eligible of them, have more than one really good chance to marry. Oh, I know what they say. But they exaggerate flirtations into proposals. This business—yes, *business*—of marrying isn't so serious a matter with the men as it is with us. And we can't hunt; we must sit and wait. In this day the stupidest men are crafty enough to see through the subtlest kind of stalking."

Emily had no reply. She could think of no arguments except those of the heart. And she felt that it would be ridiculous to bring them into the battering and bruising of this discussion.

It was in May that she refused her "good chance." In June her father fell sick. In mid-July they buried him and drove back from the cemetery to face ruin.

Ruin, in domestic finance, has meanings that range from the borderland of comedy to the blackness beyond tragedy.

The tenement family, thrust into the street and stripped of their goods for non-payment of rent, find in ruin an old acquaintance. They take a certain pleasure in the noise and confusion which their uproarious bewailing and beratings create throughout the neighbourhood. They enjoy the passers-by

pausing to pity them, a ragged and squalid group, homeless on the curb. They have been ruined many times, will be ruined many times. They are sustained by the knowledge that there are other tenements, other "easy-payment" merchants. A few hours, a day or two at most, and they are completely reëstablished and are busy making new friends among their new neighbours, exchanging reminiscences of misfortune and rumours of ideal "steady jobs."

The rich family suddenly ruined has greater shock and sorrow. But usually there are breaks in the fall. A son or a daughter has married well; the head of the family gets business opportunities through rich friends; there is wreckage enough to build up a certain comfort, to make the descent into poverty gradual, almost gentle.

But to such people as the Bromfields the word *ruin* meant—ruin. They had not had enough to lose to make their catastrophe seem important to others; indeed, the fact that a little was saved made their friends feel like congratulating them. But the ruin was none the less thorough. They were shorn of all their best belongings—all the luxury that was through habit necessity. They must give up the comfortable house in Connecticut Avenue, where they had lived for twenty years. They must leave their associations, their friends. They must go to a New England factory village. And there they would have a tiny income, to be increased only by the exertions of two women, one a helpless hypo-

chondriac, both ignorant of anything for which anyone would give pay. And this cataclysm was wrought within a week.

"Fate will surely strike the finishing blow," thought Emily, as she wandered drearily through the dismantling house. "We shall certainly lose the little we have left." And this spectre haunted her wakeful nights for weeks.

Mr. Bromfield was not a "family man." He had left his wife and home first to the neglect of servants, and afterward to the care of his daughter. As Emily grew older and able to judge his life-failure, his vanity, his selfishness—the weaknesses of which he was keenly conscious, he saw or fancied he saw in her clear eyes a look that irritated him against himself, against her, and against his home. He was there so rarely that the women never took him into account. Yet instead of bearing his death with that resigned fortitude which usually characterises the practical, self-absorbed human race in its dealings with the inevitable, they mourned him day and night.

After one of his visits of business and consolation, General Ainslie returned home with tears in his eyes.

"It is wonderful, wonderful!" he said in his "sentimental" voice—a tone which his wife understood and prepared to combat. She liked his sentimental side, but she had only too good reason to deplore its influence upon his judgment.

"What now?" she inquired.

"I've been to see Wentworth's widow and daughter. It was most touching, Abigail. He always neglected them, yet they mourn him in a way that a better man might envy."

"Mourn him? Why, he was never at home. They hardly knew him."

"Yet I have never seen such grief."

"Grief? Of course. But not for him. They don't miss him; they miss his salary—his four thousand a year. And that's the kind of grief you can't soothe. The real house of mourning is the house that's lost its breadwinner."

General Ainslie looked uncomfortable.

"Do you remember that Chinese funeral we saw at Pekin, George?" his wife continued. "Do you remember the widows in covered cages dragging along behind the corpse—and the big fellow with the prod walking behind each cage? And whenever the widows stopped howling, don't you remember how those prods were worked until the response from inside was satisfactory?"

"Yes, but—really, I must say, Abbie——"

"Well, George—poverty is the prod. No wonder they mourn Wentworth."

General Ainslie looked foolish. "I guess I won't confess," he said to himself, "that it was this afternoon I told the Bromfields they had only five hundred a year and the house in Stoughton. It would encourage her in her cynicism."

CHAPTER II.

THE DESERT ISLAND.

THREE months later—August, September, and October, the months of Stoughton's glory—gave Emily Bromfield a minute acquaintance with all that lay within her new horizon. She was as familiar with Stoughton as Crusoe with his island—and was in a Crusoe-like state of depression. She thought she had found the lowest despond of which human nature is capable on the day she saw the top of the Washington monument disappear, saw the last of the city of her enjoyments and her hopes. But now she dropped to a still lower depth—that depth in which the heart becomes a source of physical discomfort, the appetite fails, the brain sinks into a stupor and the health begins to decline.

"Don't be so blue, Emmy," Mrs. Ainslie had said at the station as they were leaving Washington. "Nothing is as bad as it seems in advance. Even Stoughton will have its consolations—though I must confess I can't think what they could be at this distance."

But the proverb was wrong and Stoughton as a reality was worse than Stoughton as a foreboding.

At first Emily was occupied in arranging their

new home—creeper-clad, broad of veranda and viewing a long sloping lawn where the sun and the moon traced the shadows of century-old trees. She began to think that Stoughton was not so bad after all. The "best people" had called and had made a good impression. Her mother had for the moment lifted herself out of peevish and tearful grief, and had ceased giving double weight to her daughter's oppressive thoughts by speaking them. But illusion and delusion departed with the departing sense of novelty.

Nowhere does nature do a kindlier summer work than in Stoughton. In winter the trees and gardens and lawns, worse than naked with their rustling or crumbling reminders of past glory, expose the prim rows of prim houses and the stiff and dull life that dozes behind their walls. In winter no one could be deceived as to what living in Stoughton meant—living in it in the sense of being forced there from a city, forced to remain permanently.

But in summer, nature charitably lends Stoughton a corner of the gorgeous garment with which she adorns its country. The sun dries the muddy streets and walks, and the town slumbers in comfort under huge trees, whose leaves quiver with what seems to be the gentle joy of a quiet life. The boughs and the creepers conspire to transform hideous little houses into crystallised songs of comfort and content. The lawns lie soft and green and restful. The gardens dance in the homely beauty of lilac and hollyhock and wild rose. Those who

then come from the city to Stoughton sigh at the contrast of this poetry with the harsh prose of city life. They wonder at the sombre faces of the old inhabitants, at the dumb and stolid expression of youth, at the fierce discontent which smoulders in the eyes of a few.

But if they stay they do not wonder long. For the town in the bare winter is the real town the year round. The town of summer, tricked out in nature's borrowed finery, is no more changed than was the jackdaw by his stolen peacock plumes. The smile, the gaiety, is on the surface. The prim, solemn old heart of Stoughton is as unmoved as when the frost is biting it.

In the first days of November Emily Bromfield, walking through the wretched streets under bare black boughs and a gray sky, had the full bitterness of her castaway life forced upon her. She felt as if she were suffocating.

She had been used to the gayest and freest society in America. Here, to talk as she had been used to talking and to hearing others talk, would have produced scandal or stupefaction. To act as she and her friends acted in Washington, would have set the preachers to preaching against her. There was no one with whom she could get into touch. She had instantly seen that the young men were not worth her while. The young women, she felt, would meet her advances only in the hope of getting the materials for envious gossip about her.

"It will be years," she said to herself, "before I

shall be able to narrow and slacken myself to fit this place. And why should I? Of what use would life be?"

She soon felt how deeply Stoughton disapproved of her, chiefly, as she thought, because she did not conceal her resentment against its prying and peeping inquiry and its narrow judgments. She was convinced that but for her bicycle and her books she would go mad. Her ever-present idea, conscious or sub-conscious, was, "How get away from Stoughton?" A hundred times a day she repeated to herself, or aloud in the loneliness of her room, "How? how? how?" sometimes in a frenzy; again, stupidly, as if "how" were a word of a complex and difficult meaning which she could not grasp.

But there was never any answer.

She had formerly wished at times that she were a man. Now, she wished it hourly. That seemed the only solution of the problem of her life—that, or marriage. And she felt she might as hopefully wish the one as the other.

Year by year, with a patience as slow and persevering as that of a colony of coral insects, Stoughton developed a small number of youth of both sexes. Year by year the railroads robbed her of her best young men, leaving behind only such as were stupid or sluggard. Year by year the young women found themselves a twelvemonth nearer the fate of the leaves which the frost fails to cut off and disintegrate. For a few there was the alternative of marrying the blighted young men—a desperate

adventure in the exchange of single for double or multiple burdens.

Some of the young women rushed about New England, visiting its towns, and finding each town a reproduction of Stoughton. Some went to the cities a visiting, and returned home dazed and baffled. A few bettered themselves in their quest; but more only increased their discontent, or, marrying, regretted the ills they had fled. Those who married away from home about balanced those who were deprived of opportunities to marry, by the girl visitors from other towns, who caught with their new faces and new man-catching tricks the Stoughton eligible-ineligibles.

At twenty a Stoughton girl began to be anxious. At twenty-five, the sickening doubt shot its anguish into her soul. At thirty came despair; and rarely, indeed, did despair leave. It was fluttered sometimes, or pretended to be; but, after a few feeble flappings, it roosted again. In Stoughton "society" the old maids outnumbered the married women.

Clearly, there was no chance to marry. Emily might have overcome the timidity of such young men as there were, and might have married almost any one of them. But her end would have been more remote than ever. It was not marriage in itself that she sought, but release from Stoughton. And none of these young men was able to make a living away from Stoughton, even should she marry him and succeed in getting him away.

She revolved the idea of visiting her friends in Washington. But there poverty barred the way. She had never had so very many clothes. Now, she could afford only the simplest and cheapest. She looked over what she had brought with her from Washington. Each bit of finery reminded her of pleasures, keen when she enjoyed them, cruelly keen in memory. The gowns were of a kind that would have made Stoughton open its sleepy eyes, but they would not do for Washington again.

The people she knew there were self-absorbed, inclined to snobbishness, to patronising contemptuously those of their own set who were overtaken by misfortunes and could not keep the pace. They tolerated these reminders of the less luxurious and less fortunate phases of life, but—well, toleration was not a virtue which Emily Bromfield cared to have exercised toward herself. She could hear Mrs. Ainslie or Mrs. Chesterton or Mrs. Connors-Smith whispering: "Yes—the poor dear—it's so sad. I really had to take pity on her. No—not a penny—I even had to send her the railway fares. But I felt it was a duty people in our position owe."

And so her prison had no door.

Emily kept her thoughts to herself. Her mother was almost as content as she had been in Washington. Did she not still have her diseases? Were there not doctors and drug-shops? Was there not a circulating library, mostly light literature of her favourite innocuous kind? And did not the old

women who called listen far more patiently than her Washington friends to tedious recitals of symptoms and of the plots and scenes of novels?

Emily could keep to her room or ride about the country on her bicycle. She at least had the freedom of her prison, and was not disturbed in her companionship with solitude. With the bad weather, she hid in her room more and more. She would sit there hours on hours in the same position, staring out of the window, thinking the same thoughts over and over again, and finding fresh springs of unhappiness in them each time.

Occasionally she gave way to storms of grief.

The day she looked over her dresses under the stimulus of the idea of visiting Washington was one of her worst days. As she stood with her finery about her and a half-hope in her heart, she recalled her Washington life—her school-days, her first season, her flirtations, the confident, arrogant way in which she had looked forward on life. Then came the thought that all was over, that she could not go to Washington, that she must stay in Stoughton—on and on and on——

She grew hot and cold by turns, sank to the floor, buried her face in the heap of cloth and lace and silk. If the good people of Stoughton had peeped at her they would have thought her possessed of an evil spirit. She gnashed her teeth and tore at the garments, her slight frame shaking with sobs of impotent rage and despair.

When she came to herself and went downstairs,

pale and calm and cold, her mother was talking with a woman who had come in to gossip. She took up a book and was gone.

"Your daughter is not looking well," said Mrs. Alcott, sourly resentful of Emily's courteous frigidity.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Bromfield, "she takes her father's death *so* to heart."

CHAPTER III.

SAIL—HO!

WINTER'S swoop upon Stoughton that year was early and savage. In her desperate loneliness and boredom Emily began occasionally to indulge in the main distraction of Stoughton—church. On a Sunday late in March she went for the first time since Christmas. Her mother had succumbed to the drugs and had been really ill, so ill that Emily did not dare let herself admit the dread of desolation which menaced. But, the crisis past, Mrs. Bromfield had rapidly returned to her normal state. The peril of death cowed or dignified her into silence. When she again took up her complainings, her daughter was reassured.

As she walked the half mile to the little church, Emily was in better spirits than at any time since she had come to Stoughton. The reaction from her fears had given her natural spirits of youth their first chance to assert themselves. She found herself hopeful for no reason, cheerful not because of benefits received or expected, but because of calamities averted. "I might be so much worse off," she was thinking. "There is mother, and there is the income. I feel almost rich—and a little ungrateful. I'm in quite a church-going mood."

The walk through the cold air did her good, and as she went up the aisle her usually pale face was delicately flushed and she was carrying her slender but very womanly figure with that erectness and elasticity which made its charm in the days when people were in the habit of discussing her prospects as based upon her title to beauty. Her black dress and small black hat brought out the finest effects of her red brown hair and violet eyes and rosy white skin. She was, above all, most distinguished looking—in strong contrast to the stupid faces and ill-carried forms in "Sunday best."

Her coming caused a stir—that rustling and creaking of garments feminine and starched, which in the small town church always arouses the dozers for something uncommon. She faintly smiled a greeting to Mrs. Cockburn as she entered the pew where that old lady was sitting. She had just raised her head from the appearance of prayer, when Mrs. Cockburn whispered:

"Have you seen young Mr. Wayland?"

Emily could not remember that she had heard of him. But Mrs. Cockburn's agitation demanded a show of interest, so she whispered:

"No—where is he?"

She would have said, "Who is he?" but that would have called for a long explanation. And, as Mrs. Cockburn had a wide space between her upper front teeth, every time she whispered the letter s the congregation rustled and the minister was disconcerted.

"There," whispered Mrs. Cockburn. "Straight across—don't look now, for he's looking at us—straight across to the other side two pews forward."

When they rose for the hymn, Emily glanced and straightway saw the cause of Mrs. Cockburn's excitement. He was a commonplace-looking young man with a heavy moustache. His hair was parted in the middle and brushed back carefully and smoothly. He was dressed like a city man, as distinguished from the Stoughton man who, little as he owed to nature, owed even less to art as exploited by the Stoughton tailors.

Young Mr. Wayland would not have attracted Emily's attention in a city because he was in no way remarkable. But in Stoughton he seemed to her somewhat as an angel might seem to a Peri wandering in outer darkness. When she discovered him looking at her a few moments later, and looking with polite but interested directness, she felt herself colouring. She also felt pleased—and hopeful in that fantastic way in which the desperate dream of desperate chances.

After the service she stood talking to Mrs. Cockburn, affecting an unprecedented interest in a woman whom she liked as little—if as much—as any in Stoughton. Her back was toward the aisle but she felt her "sail-ho," coming.

"He's on his way to us," said Mrs. Cockburn hoarsely—she had been paying no attention to what Emily had been saying to her, or to her own

answers. She now pushed eagerly past Emily to greet the young man at the door of the pew.

"Why, I'm so glad to see you again, Mr. Wayland," she said with a cordiality that verged on hysteria. "It has been a long time. I'm afraid you've forgotten an old woman like me,"

"No, indeed, Mrs. Cockburn," replied Wayland, who had just provided himself with her name. "It's been only four years, and you've not changed."

Mrs. Cockburn saw his eyes turn toward Emily and introduced him. Emily was not blushing now, or apparently interested. She seemed to be simply waiting for her path to be cleared.

"I felt certain it was you," began young Wayland, a little embarrassed. He made a gesture as if to unbutton his long coat and take something from his inside pocket, then seemed to change his mind. "I've a note of introduction to you, that is to your mother—Mrs. Ainslie, you know. But I heard that your mother was ill. And I hesitated about coming."

"Mother is much better." Emily was friendly, but not effusive. "I am sure she—both of us—will be glad to see a friend of Mrs. Ainslie."

She smiled, shook hands with him, gave him a fascinating little nod, submitted to a kiss on the cheek from Mrs. Cockburn and went swiftly and gracefully down the aisle. Wayland looked after her with admiration. He had been in Stoughton three weeks and was profoundly bored.

Mrs. Cockburn was also looking after her, but

disapprovingly. "A nice young woman in some ways," she said. "But she carries her head too high for the plain people here."

"She's had a good deal of trouble, I've heard," Wayland answered, not committing himself.

The next morning Mrs. Bromfield got a letter from Mrs. Ainslie. It was of unusual length for Mrs. Ainslie, who was a bird-of-passage that rarely paused long enough for extended communication.

"I never could get used to that big, angular handwriting," said Mrs. Bromfield to her daughter. "Won't you read it to me, please?"

Emily began at "My Dear Frances" and read steadily through, finding in the postscript four sentences which should have begun the letter of so worldly-wise a woman: "Don't on any account let Emily see this. You know how she acted about Bob Fulton. She ought to have learned better by this time, but I don't trust her. Be careful what you say to her."

Mrs. Ainslie was urging the opportunity offered by the sojourn of young Wayland in Stoughton. "Emily will have a clear field," she wrote. "He's got money in his own right—millions when his father dies—and he's a good deal of a fool—dissipated, I hear, but in a prudent, business-like way. It's Emily's chance for a resurrection."

Mrs. Bromfield was made speechless by the postscript. Emily sat silent, looking at the letter on the table before her.

"Don't be prejudiced against him, dear," pleaded her mother.

"I imagine it doesn't matter in the least what I think of him," Emily replied. She rose and left the room, sending back from the doorway a short, queer laugh that made her mother feel how shut out she was from what was going on in her daughter's mind.

If she could have seen into that small, ethereal-looking head she would have been astounded at the thoughts boiling there. Emily had been bred in an atmosphere of mercenary or, rather, "practical" ideas. But she was also a woman of sound and independent mind, in the habit of thinking for herself, and with strong mental and physical self-respect. She would have hesitated to marry unwisely for love. But she had been far from that state of self-degradation in which a young woman deliberately and consciously closes her heart, locks the door and flings the key away. Now however, the deepest instinct of the human animal—the instinct of self-preservation—was aroused in her. It seemed to her that an imperative command had issued from that instinct—a command at any cost to flee the living death of Stoughton.

* * * * * * * *

That same afternoon Mrs. Bromfield learned—without having to ask a question—all that Stoughton knew about the Waylands: They were the pride of the town and also its chief irritation. It gloried in them because it believed that the report of their millions was as clamourous throughout the

nation as in its own ears. It was exasperated against them, because it believed that they ought to live in Stoughton and be content with a life which it thought, or thought it thought, desirable above life in any other place whatsoever.

So as long as Mrs. Wayland lived, the family had spent at least half of each year there; and Stoughton, satisfied on that point, disliked them for other reasons, first of all for being richer than any one else. When Mrs. Wayland died, leaving an almost grown daughter and a son just going into trousers, General Wayland had put the girl in school at Dobbs Ferry-on-the-Hudson, the boy in Groton, had closed the house and made New York his residence. The girl died two years after the death of her mother. The boy went from Groton to Harvard, from Harvard to his father's business—the Cotton Cloth Trust. The Wayland homestead, the most considerable in Stoughton with its two wings built to the original square house, with its conservatories and its stables, was opened for but a few weeks each winter. And then it was opened only in part—to receive the General on his annual business visit to the factories of the Stoughton Cotton Mills Company, the largest group in the "combine." Sometimes he brought Edgar. But Edgar gave the young women of Stoughton no opportunities to ensnare him. He kept to his work and departed at the earliest possible moment. This year he had come alone, as his father had now put him in charge of their Stoughton interests.

CHAPTER IV.

A BLACK FLAG.

UNTIL Wayland saw Emily at church he had no intention to seize the opportunity which Mrs. Ainslie's disinterested kindliness had made for him. Ever since he left the restraint of the "prep." school for Harvard, with a liberal allowance and absolute freedom, women had been an important factor in his life; and they were still second only to money-making. But not such women as Emily Bromfield.

In theory he had the severest ideas of woman. Practically, his conception of woman's sphere was not companionship or love or the family, not either mental or sentimental, but frankly physical. And something in that element in Emily's personality—perhaps the warmth of her beauty of form in contrast to the coldness of her beauty of face—made it impossible for this indulgent and self-indulgent young man to refrain from seeking her out. He was close with his money in every way except where his personal comfort or amusement was concerned. There he was generous to prodigality. And when he learned how poor the Bromfields were and how

fiercely discontented Emily was in her Stoughton prison-cell, he decided that the only factor in the calculation was whether or not on better acquaintance his first up-flaring would persist.

In one respect Washington society is unequalled. Nowhere else is a girl able so quickly and at so early an age to get so complete an equipment of worldly knowledge. Emily's three years under the tutelage of cynical Mrs. Ainslie had made her nearly as capable to see through men as are acute married women. Following the Washington custom of her day, she had gone about with men almost as freely as do the girls of a Western town. And the men whom she had thus intimately known were not innocent, idealising, deferential Western youths, but men of broad and unscrupulous worldliness. Many of them were young diplomats, far from home, without any sense of responsibility in respect of the women of the country in which they were sojourners of a day. They played the game of "man and woman" adroitly and boldly.

Emily understood Wayland only so far as the clean can from theoretical experience understand the unclean. Thus far she quickly penetrated into his intentions toward her and his ideas of her. He was the reverse of complex. He had not found it necessary to employ in these affairs the craft he was beginning to display in business, to the delight of his father. His crude and candid method of conquest had been successful hitherto. Failure in this instance seemed unlikely. And there were no male

relatives who might bring him to an uncomfortable accounting.

Two weeks after he met Emily—weeks in which he had seen her several times—he went to her house for dinner. She had been advancing gradually, in strict accordance with her plan of campaign. Wayland had unwittingly disarmed himself and doubly armed her by giving undue weight to her appearance of extreme youth and golden inexperence, and by overestimating his own and his money's fascinations. He had not a suspicion that there was design or even elaborate preparation in the vision which embarrassed and fired him as he entered the Bromfields' parlour. She was in a simple black dinner gown, which displayed her arms and her rosy white shoulders. And she had a small head and a way of doing her hair that brought out the charm of every curve of her delicate face. Instead of looking cold this evening, she put into her look and smile a seeming of—well, more than mere liking, he thought.

It happened to be one of Mrs. Bromfield's good days, so she rambled on, covering Wayland's silence. Occasionally — not too often — Emily lifted her glance from her plate and gave the young man the full benefit of her deep, dark, violet eyes. When Mrs. Bromfield spoke apologisingly of the absence of wine, he was surprised to note that he had not missed it.

But after dinner, when he was alone in the sitting-room with Emily, he regretted that he had had

nothing to drink. He could explain his timidity, his inability to get near the subject uppermost in his mind only on the ground that he had had no stimulus to his courage and his tongue. All that day he had been planning what he would say ; yet as he went home in his automobile, upon careful review of all that had been said and done, he found that he had made no progress. The conversation had been general and not for an instant personal to her. The only personalities had been his own rather full account of himself, past, present and future—a rambling recital, the joint result of his nervousness and her encouragement.

"At least she understands that I don't intend to marry," he thought, remembering one part of the conversation.

"There's nothing in marriage for me," he had said, after a clumsy paving of the way.

"Of course not," she had assented. "I never could understand how a young man, situated as you are, could be foolish enough to chain himself."

And then, as he remembered with some satisfaction, she added the only remark she had made which threw any light upon her own feelings and ideas: "It would be as foolish for you to marry, as it would be for me to refuse a chance to get out of this dreadful place."

As he reflected on this he had no suspicion of subtlety. It did not occur to him that she hardly deserved credit for frankly confessing what could not be successfully denied or concealed, or that she

might have confessed in order to put him off his guard, to make him think her guilelessly straightforward.

A second and a third call, a drive and several long walks; still he had done nothing to further his scheme. He put off his return to New York, seeing her every day, each time in a fresh aspect of beauty, in a new mood of fascination. One night, a month after he met her at church, he found her alone on the wide piazza. She was in an evening dress, white, clinging close to her, following her every movement. He soon reached his limit of endurance.

"You are maddening," he said abruptly, stretching out his arms to seize her. He thrust her wraps violently away from her throat and one shoulder. He was crushing her against his chest, was kissing her savagely.

She wrenched herself away from him, panting with anger, with repulsion. But he thought it was a return of his ardour, and she did not undeceive him. "You mustn't!" she said. "You know that it is impossible. You must go. Good-night!"

She left him and he, after waiting uncertainly a few moments, went slowly down the drive, in a rage, but a rage in which anger and longing were curiously mingled. When he called the next day, she was "not at home." When he called again she could not come down, she must stay beside her mother, who had had another attack, so the servant explained in a stammering, unconvincing manner. He wrote that he wished to see her to say good-bye

as he was leaving the next day. Then he called and she came into the parlour—"just for an instant." She was wearing a loose gown, open at the throat, with sleeves falling away from her arms. Her small feet were thrust into a pair of high-heeled red slippers and her stockings had openwork over the ankles. She seemed so worried about her mother that it was impossible for him to re-open the one subject and resume progress, as he had hoped to do. But it was not impossible for him to think. And Emily, anxiously watching him from behind her secure entrenchments, noted that he was thinking as she wished and hoped. His looks, his voice encouraged her to play her game, her only possible game, courageously to the last card.

"If he doesn't come back," she thought, "at least I've done my best And I think he *will* come."

She sent him away regretfully, but immediately, standing two steps up the stairway in a final effective pose. He set his teeth together and took the train for NewYork. There he outdid all his previous impulses of extravagant generosity with himself, but he could not drive her from his mind. Those who formerly amused him, now seemed vulgar, silly, and stale. They made her live the more vividly in his imagination. Business gave him no relief. At his office his mind wandered to her, and the memory of that stolen kiss made his nerves quiver and hot flushes course over and through him. At the end of three weeks, he returned to Stoughton. "I've let myself go

crazy," he thought, "I'll see her again and convince myself that I'm a fool."

As he neared her house, his mind became more at ease. When he rang the bell he was laughing at himself for having got into such a frenzy over "nothing but a woman like the rest of 'em." But as soon as he saw her, he was drunk again.

"I love you," he stammered. "I can't do without you. Will you—will you marry me, Emily?"

There was no triumph either in her face or in her mind. She was hearing the hammer smash in the thick walls of her prison, but she shrank from the sound. As she looked at his commonplace, heavy-featured face; as she listened to his monotonous voice, with its hint of tyranny and temper; as she felt his greedy eyes and hot, trembling fingers;—a revulsion swept over her and left her sick with disgust—disgust for her despicable self, loathing for him and for his feeling for her—his "love."

"How can I?" she thought, turning away to hide her expression from him. "How can I? And yet, how can I refuse?"

"I must have until—until this evening," she said in a low voice and with an effort. "I—I thought you had gone—for good and all—and I tried to put you out of my thoughts."

She was standing near him and he crushed her in his arms. "You must, you must," he exclaimed. "I must have you."

She let him kiss her once, then pushed him away, hiding her face in no mere pretence of modesty and

maidenly repulsion. "This evening," she said, almost flying from him.

She paused at the door of her mother's sitting-room. From it came the odor of drugs, and in it were all the evidences of the tedious companionship of her poverty-stricken prison life—the invalid chair with its upholstery tattering; the worn carpet; the wall paper stained, and in one corner giving way because of a leak which they had no money to repair; the table with its litter of bottles, of drug-boxes, of patent-medicine advertisements and trashy novels; in the bed the hypochondriac herself, old, yellow, fat in an unhealthy way, with her empty, childish, peevish face.

Emily did not enter, but went on to her own room—bare, cheerless, proofs of poverty and impending rags and patches threatening to obtrude. She looked out through the trees at the glimpses of the town—every beat of the pulse of her youth was a sullen and hateful protest against it. Beyond were the tall chimneys of the mills, with the black clouds from them smutching the sky—there lived the work-people, the boredom of the town driving them to brutal dissipation.

"I must! I must!" she said, between her set teeth, then sank down in the window seat and buried her face in her arms.

That evening she accepted him, and the next morning her mother announced the engagement to the first caller.

CHAPTER V.

THE PENITENT PIRATE.

WAYLAND had the commercial instinct too strongly developed not to fear that he was paying an exorbitant price for a fancy which would probably be as passing as it was powerful. Whenever Emily was not before his eyes he was pushing the bill angrily aside. But in the stubbornness of self-indulgence he refused to permit himself to see that he was making a fool of himself. If she had not gauged him accurately, or, rather, if she had not mentally and visibly shrunk even from the contact with him necessary to shaking hands, he might quickly have come to his cool-blooded senses. But their engagement made no change in their relations. Her mother's illness helped her to avoid seeing him for more than a few minutes at a time. Her affectation of an extreme of prudery—with inclination and policy reinforcing each the other—made her continue to keep herself as elusive, as tantalising to him as she had been at that dinner when he "fell head over heels in love—" so he described it to her. And he thoroughly approved

of her primness. For, to him there were only two classes of women—good women, those who knew nothing; bad women, those who knew and, knowing, must of necessity feel and act as coarsely as himself. The most of the time which he believed she was devoting to her mother, she was passing in her room in arguing the two questions: "How can I give him up? How can I marry him?"

Her acute intelligence did not permit her to deceive herself. She knew with just what kind of man she was dealing, knew she would continue to loathe him after she had married him, knew her reason for marrying him was as base, if not baser, than his reason for marrying her. "He is at least a purchaser," she said to herself contemptuously, "while I am merely the thing purchased." And her conduct was condemned by her whole nature except the one potent instinct of feminine laziness. "If only I had been taught to work," she thought "or taught not to look down upon work! Yet how could it be so low as this?"

She felt that she might not thus degrade herself if she had some one to consult, some one to encourage her to recover and retain her self-respect. But who was there? She laughed at the idea of consulting her mother—that never strong mind, now enfeebled to imbecility by drugs and novels. And even if she had had a capable mother, what would have been her advice? Would it not have been to be "sensible" and "practical" and not fling away

a brilliant "chance"—wealth and distinction for herself, proper surroundings and education for the children that were sure to come? And would not that advice be sound?

Only arguments of "sentimentality," of supersensitiveness, appeared in opposition to the urgings of conventional everyday practice. And was not Stoughton worse than Wayland? Could it possibly be more provocative of all that was base in her to live with Stoughton than to live with Wayland? Wayland would be one of a great many elements in her environment after the few first weeks of marriage. If she accepted the alternative, it would be her whole environment, in all probability for the rest of her life.

A month after the announcement of the engagement, her mother sank into a stupor and, toward the end of the fifth day, died. Just as her father had been missed and mourned more than many a father who deserved and received love, so now her mother, never deserving nor trying to deserve love, was missed and mourned as are few mothers who have sacrificed everything to their children. This fretful, self-absorbed invalid was all that Emily had in the world.

Wayland was startled when Emily threw herself into his arms and clinging close to him sobbed and wept on his shoulder. Sorrow often quickens into sympathy the meanest natures. The bereaved are amazed to find the world so strangely gentle for the time. And Wayland for the moment was lifted

above himself. There were tenderness, affection in his voice and in the clasp of his arms about her.

"I have no one, no one," she moaned. "Oh, my good mother, my dear little mother! Ah, God, what shall I do?"

"We will bear it together, dear," he whispered. "My dear, my beautiful girl." And for the first time he genuinely respected a woman, felt the promptings of the honest instincts of manliness.

His change had a profound effect upon the young girl in her mood of loneliness and dependence. She reproached herself for having thought so ill of him, for having underrated his character. With quick generosity she was at the opposite extreme; she treated him with a friendliness which enabled him to see her as she really was—in all respects except the one where desperation was driving her to action abhorrent to her normal self.

As her sweetness and high-minded intelligence unfolded before his surprised eyes, he began to think of her as a human being instead of thinking only of the effect of her beauty upon his senses. He grew to like her, to regard her as an ideal woman for a wife. But—he did not want a wife. And as the new feeling developed, the old feeling died away.

Emily had gained a friend. But she had lost a lover.

Two weeks after her mother's funeral, Wayland kissed her good-night as calmly as if he had been her brother. At the gate he paused and looked

back at the house, already dark except in one second-story room, where Emily's aunt was waiting up for her. "I am not worthy of her," he said to himself. "I am not fit to marry her. I should be miserable trying to live up to such a woman. I must get out of it."

But how? He pretended to himself that he was hesitating because of his regard for her and her need for him. In fact his hesitation arose from doubt about the way to escape from this most uncongenial atmosphere without betraying to her what a dishonourable creature he was. And the more he studied the difficulty, the more formidable it seemed. This however only increased his eagerness to escape, his alarm at the prospect of being tied for life to moral and mental superiority.

He hoped she would give him an excuse. But as she now liked him, she was the better able to conceal the fact that she did not love him; and had he been far less unskilled in reading feminine character, he would still have been deceived. Emily was deceiving herself—almost.

As soon as he felt that he could leave with decency, he told her he must go to New York. She had been noting that he no longer spoke of their marriage, no longer urged that it be hastened. But it occurred to her that he might be restrained by the fear of distressing her when her mother had been dead so short a time; and this seemed a satisfactory explanation. Three days after he reached New York he sent this letter—the result of an effort that

half-filled the scrap-basket in a quiet corner of the writing-room of his club :

I have been thinking over our engagement and I am convinced that when you know my mind, you will wish it to come to an end. I am not worthy of you. You are mistaken in me. I could not make you happy. You are too far above me in every way. It would be spoiling your whole life to marry you under such false pretences. Looking back over our acquaintance, I am ashamed of the motives which led me to make this engagement. Forgive me for being so abrupt, but I think the truth is best.

" Pretty raw," he thought, as he read it over. " But it's the truth and the truth *is* best in this case. I can't afford to trifle. And—what can she do ? "

When Emily finished reading the letter, she was crushed. Her pride, her vanity, her future—all stabbed in the vitals. Just when she thought herself most secure, she was overthrown and trampled. She could see Stoughton gloating over her—who would have thought that Stoughton could ever reach and touch *her ?* She could see herself pinioned there, or in some similiar Castle Despair, for life.

To be outwitted by such a man—and how? She could not explain it. Her experience of ways masculine had not been intimate enough to give her a clue to the subtle cause of Wayland's changed attitude. She paced her room in fury, denouncing him as a cur, a traitor, a despicable creature, too vile and low for adequate portrayal in any known medium of expression. She went over scheme after

scheme for holding him to his promise, for bringing him back—some of them schemes which made her blush when she recalled them in after years. She wrote a score of letters—long, short; bitter, pleading; some appealing to his honour, some filled with hypocritical expressions of love and veiling a vague threat which she hoped might terrify him, though she knew it was meaningless. But she tore them up. And after tossing much and sleeping a little she sent this answer:

DEAR EDGAR:

Certainly, if you feel that way. But you mustn't let any nervousness about the past interfere with our friendship. That has become very dear to me. The only ill luck I wish you is that you'll have to come to Stoughton soon. I won't ask you to write to me, because I know you're not fond of writing letters—and nothing happens here that any one would care to hear about. My aunt is staying with me for a few months at least. Until I see you,

EMILY.

"It's of no use to make a row," she thought. "If anything can bring him back, certainly it is not tears or reproaches or threats. And how appeal to the honour of a man who has no honour?"

Her mind was clear enough, but her feelings were in a ferment. She knew that it was in some way her fault that she had lost him. "And I deserved to lose him," she admitted. "But that doesn't excuse him or help me."

He answered promptly:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

How like you your letter was. If I did not know so well how unworthy of you I am, how I would plead for the honour of having such a woman as my wife. I wish I could look forward to seeing you soon—but I'm going abroad on Saturday and I shan't return for some time. As soon as I do, I'll let you know. It is good of you to offer me your friendship. I am proud to accept it. If you ever need a friend, you will find him in

Yours faithfully,

EDGAR WAYLAND.

The expression of Emily's face was anything but good, it was the reverse of "lady-like," as she read this death-warrant of her last hope. "The coward!" she exclaimed, and, as her eyes fell on the satirical formality, "Yours faithfully," she uttered an ugly laugh which would have given a severe shock to Wayland's new ideas of her.

"Fooled—jilted—left-for dead," she thought, despair closing in, thick and black. And she crawled into bed, to lie sleepless and tearless, her eyes burning.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHANGED CRUSOE.

IN the third night Emily had ten hours of the sleep of exhausted youth. She awoke in the mood of the brilliant July morning which was sending sunshine and song and the odour of honeysuckles through the rifts in the lattices of her shutters. She was restored to her normal self. She was able to examine her affairs calmly in the light of her keen and courageous mind.

Ever since she had been old enough to be of active use, she had had the training of responsibility —responsibility not only for herself, but also for her mother and the household. She had had the duties of both woman and man forced upon her and so had developed capacity and self-reliance. She had read and experienced and thought perhaps beyond the average for girls of her age and breeding. Undoubtedly she had read and thought more than most girls who are, or fancy they are, physically attractive. Her father's caustic contempt for shallow culture, for ignorance thinly disguised by good manners, had been his one strong influence on her.

"All my own fault," she was saying to herself now, as she lay propped on her elbow among her pillows. "It was a base plan, unworthy of me. I

ought to be glad that the punishment was not worse. The only creditable thing about it is that I played the game so badly that I lost." And then she smiled, wondering how much of her new virtue was real and how much was mere making the best of a disastrous defeat.

Why had she lost? What was the false move? She could not answer, but she felt that it was through ignorance of some trick which a worse woman would have known.

"Never again, never again," she thought, "will I take that road. What I get I must get by direct means. Either I'm not crafty enough or not mean enough to win in the other way."

She was singing as she went downstairs to join her aunt. The old woman, her father's sister who had never married, was knitting in the shady corner of the front porch, screened from the sun by a great overhanging tree, and from the drive and the road beyond, by the curtain of honeysuckles and climbing roses. As Emily came into view, she dropped the knitting and looked at her with disapproval upon her thin old face.

"But why, auntie?" said the girl, answering the look. "I feel like singing. I feel so young and well and—hopeful. You don't wish me to play the hypocrite and look glum and sad? Besides, the battle must begin soon, and good spirits may be half of it."

Her aunt sighed and looked at her with the unoffending pity of sympathy. "Perhaps you're

right, Emmy," she said. "God knows, life is cruel enough without our fighting to prolong its miseries. And it does seem as if you'd had more than your share of them thus far." She was admiring her beautiful niece and thinking how ill that fragile fineness seemed fitted for the struggle which there seemed no way of averting. "You're almost twenty-one," she said aloud. "You ought to have had a good hnsband and everything you wanted by this time."

Emily winced at this unconscious stab into the unhealed wound. "Isn't there anything in life for a woman on her own account?" she asked impatiently. "Is her only hope through some man? Isn't it possible for her to make her own happiness, work out her own salvation? Must she wait until a man condescends to ask her to marry him?"

"I'd like to say no," replied her aunt, "but I can't. As the world is made now, a woman's happiness comes through home and children. And that means a husband. Even if her idea of happiness were not home and children, still she's got to have a husband."

"But why? Why do you say 'as the world is made now?' Aren't there thousands, tens of thousands of women who make their own lives, working in all sorts of ways—from teaching school to practising medicine or law or writing or acting?"

"Yes—but they're still only women. They may lie about it. But with a few exceptions, abnormal women, who are hardly women at all, they're simply

filling a gap in their lives—perhaps trying to find husbands in unusual ways. Everybody must have an object, to be in the least happy. And children is the object the world has fixed for us women. Whether we're conscious of it or not, we pursue it. And if we're thwarted in it, we're—well, we're not happy."

The old woman was staring out sadly into space. The cheerfulness had faded from the girl's face. But presently she shook her head defiantly and broke the silence.

"I refuse to believe it," she said with energy. "Oh, I don't deny that I *feel* just as you describe. And why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't we all? Aren't we brought up that way? Are we ever taught anything else? It's the way women have been trained from the beginning. But—that doesn't make it so."

"No, it doesn't," replied her aunt. "And probably it isn't so. But don't make the mistake, child, of thinking that the world is run on a basis of what's so. It isn't. It's run on a basis of think-so and believe-so and hope-so."

Emily stood up beside her aunt and looked out absently through the leaves. "I don't care what any one says or what every one says," she said. "I don't say that I don't want love and home and all that. I do want it. But I think I want it as a man wants it. I want it as my very own, not as the property of some man which he graciously or grudgingly permits me to share. And I purpose to

try to make my own life. If I marry, it will be as a man marries—when I'm pleased and not before. No, don't look frightened, auntie. I'm not going to do anything shocking. I understand that the game must be played according to the rules, or one is likely to be excluded."

"Well, you've got to make your living—at least for the present," replied her aunt. "And it doesn't matter much what your theory is. The question is, what can you do; and if you can do something, how are you to get the chance to do it. I can't advise you. I'm only a useless old maid—waiting in a corner for death, already forgotten."

Emily put on an expression of amused disbelief that was more flattering than true, and full of vague but potent consolation. "I don't think I need advice," she said, "so much as I need courage. And there you can help me, auntie dear—can, and will."

"I?" The old woman was pleased and touched. "What can I say or do? I can only tell you what you already know—though I must say I didn't when I was your age—can only tell you that there's nothing to be afraid of in all this wide world except false pride."

She looked thoughtfully at her knitting, then anxiously at the resolute face of her niece. "In our country," she went on, "it's been certain from the start, it seems to me, that what you've been saying would be the gospel of the women as well as of the men. But it takes women a long time

to get over false pride. You are going to be a working-woman. If only you can see that all honest work is honourable! If only you can remember that your life must be made by yourself, that to look timidly at others and dread what they will say about you is cowardly and contemptible! How I wish I had your chance! How I wish I'd had the courage to take my own chance!"

CHAPTER VII.

BACK TO THE MAINLAND.

WITHIN a month old Miss Bromfield was again with her sister at Stockbridge; the house in Stoughton was sold; there were twenty-two hundred dollars to Emily's credit in the Stoughton National Bank—her whole capital except a hundred and fifty dollars which she had with her; and she herself was standing at the exit from the Grand Central Station in New York City, facing with a sinking heart and frightened eyes the row of squalid cabs and clamourous cabmen. One of these took her to the boarding-house in East Thirty-first Street near Madison Avenue where her friend, Theresa Duncan, lived.

"Of course there's a chance," Theresa had written. "Come straight on here. Something is sure to turn up. And there's nothing like being on the spot."

Of the women of her acquaintance who made their own living, Theresa alone was in an independent position—with her time her own, and with no suggestion of domestic service in her employment. They had been friends at school and had kept up the friendship by correspondence. Before Mr.

Bromfield died, Theresa's father had been swept under by a Wall Street tidal wave and, when it receded, had been found on the shore with empty pockets and a bullet in his brain. Emily wrote to her at once, but the answer did not come until six months had passed. Then Theresa announced that she was established in a small but sufficient commission business. "I shop for busy New York women and have a growing out-of-town trade," she wrote. "And I am almost happy. It is fine to be free."

At the boarding-house Emily looked twice at the number to assure herself that she was not mistaken. She had expected nothing so imposing as this mansion-like exterior. When a man-servant opened the door and she saw high ceilings and heavy mouldings, she inquired for Miss Duncan in the tone of one who is sure there is a mistake. But before the man answered, her illusion vanished. He was a slattern creature in a greasy evening coat, a day waistcoat, a stained red satin tie, its flaming colour fighting for precedence with a huge blue glass scarf pin. And Emily now saw that the splendours of what had been a fine house in New York's modest days were overlaid with cheap trappings and with grime and stain and other evidences of slovenly housekeeping.

The air was saturated with an odour of inferior food, cooking in poor butter and worse lard. It was one of the Houses of the Seem-to-be. The carpets seemed to be Turkish or Persian, but were

made in Newark and made cheaply. The furniture seemed to be French, but was Fourteenth street. The paper seemed to be brocade, but was from the masses of poor stuff tossed upon the counters of second-class department stores for the fumblings of noisome bargain-day crowds. The paintings seemed to be pictures, but were such daubs as the Nassau street dealers auction off to swindle-seeking clerks at the lunch hour. In a corner of the "salon" stood what seemed-to-be a cabinet for bric-a-brac but was a dilapidated folding bed.

"Dare I sit?" thought Emily. "What seems to be a chair may really be some hollow sham that will collapse at the touch."

"A vile hole, isn't it?" was one of Theresa's first remarks, after an enthusiastic greeting and a competent apology for not meeting her at the station. "We may be able to take a flat together. I would have done it long ago, if I'd not been alone."

"Yes," said Emily, "and I may persuade Aunt Ann to come and live with us as chaperon."

"Oh, that will be so nice," replied Theresa in a doubtful, reluctant tone, with a quizzical look in her handsome brown eyes. "If there is a prime necessity for a working-woman, it is a chaperon."

"You're laughing at me," said Emily, flushing but good-humoured. "I meant simply that my aunt could look after the flat while we're away. You don't know her. She'd never bother us. She understands how to mind her own business."

"Well, the flat and the chaperon are still in the

future. The first question is, what are you going into? You used to write such good essays at school and your letters are clever. Why not newspaper work?"

"But what could I do?"

"Get a trial as a reporter."

Before Emily's mind came a vision of a ball she had attended in Washington less than two years before—the lofty entrance, the fashionable guests incrowding from their carriages; at one side, a dingy group, two seedy-looking men and a homely, dowdy woman, taking notes of names and costumes. She shuddered.

Theresa noted the shudder, and laid her hand on Emily's arm. "You must drop that, my dear—you must, must, must."

Emily coloured. "I will, will, will," she said with a guilty laugh. "But, Theresa, you understand, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I remember. But I've left all that behind—at least I've tried to. You've got to be just like a man when he makes the start. As Mr. Marlowe was saying the other night, it's no worse than being a bank messenger and presenting notes to men who can't pay; or being a lawyer's clerk and handing people dreadful papers that they throw in your face. No matter where you start there are hard knocks. And——"

"I know it, I expect it, and I'm not sorry that it is so. It's part of the price of learning to live. I'm not complaining."

"I hope you'll be able to say that a year from now. I confess I did, and do, complain. I can't get over my resentment at the injustice of it. Why doesn't everybody see that we're all in the same boat and that snubbing and sneering only make it harder all round?"

Emily had expected to find the Theresa of school days developed along the lines that were promising. Instead, she found the Theresa of school days changed chiefly by deterioration. She was undeniably attractive—a handsome, magnetic, shrewd young woman full of animal spirits. But her dress was just beyond the line of good taste, and on inspection revealed tawdriness and lapses; her manners were a little too pronounced in their freedom; her speech barely escaped license. Her effort to show hostility to conventions was impudent rather than courageous. Worst of all, she had lost that finish of refinement which makes merits shine and dims even serious defects. She had cultivated a shallow cynicism—of the concert hall and the "society" play. It took all the brightness of her eyes, all the brilliance of her teeth, all her physical charm to overcome the impression of this gloze of reckless smartness.

In her room were many copies of a weekly journal of gossip and scandal, filled with items about people whom it called "the Four Hundred" and "the Mighty Few" and of whom it spoke with familiarity, yet with the deference of pretended disdain. Emily noticed that Theresa and her acquain-

tances in the boarding-house talked much of these persons, in a way which made it clear that they did not know them and regarded the fact as greatly to their own discredit.

The one subject which Theresa would not discuss was her shopping business. Emily was eager to hear about it, and, as far as politeness permitted, encouraged her to talk of it, but Theresa always sheered off. Nor did she seem to be under the necessity of giving it close or regular attention.

"It looks after itself," she said, with an uneasy laugh. "Let's talk of your affairs. We're going to dine Thursday night with Frank Demorest and a man we think can help you—a man named Marlowe. He writes for the *Democrat*. He goes everywhere getting news of politics and wars. I see his name signed every once in a while. He's clever, much cleverer to talk with than he is as a writer. Usually writers are such stupid talkers. Frank says they save all their good wares to sell."

On Thursday at half-past seven the two men came. Demorest was tall and thin, with a languid air which Emily knew at once was carefully studied from the best models in fiction and in the class that poses. One could see at a glance that he was spending his life in doing deliberately useless things. His way of speaking to admiring Theresa was after the pattern of well-bred insolence. Marlowe was not so tall, but his personality seemed to her as vivid and sincere as Demorest's seemed colourless and false. He had the self-possession of one who is well ac-

quainted with the human race. His eyes were gray-green, keen, rather small and too restless—Emily did not like them. He spoke swiftly yet distinctly. Demorest seemed a man of the world, Marlowe a citizen of the world.

They got into Demorest's open automobile, Marlowe and Emily in the back seat, and set out for Clairmont. For the first time in nearly two years Emily was experiencing a sensation akin to happiness. The city looked vast and splendid and friendly. Wherever her eyes turned there were good-humoured faces—the faces of well-dressed, healthy women and men who were out under that soft, glowing summer sky in a determined search for pleasure. She saw that Marlowe was smiling as he looked at her.

"Why are you laughing at me?" she asked, as the automobile slowed down in a press of cabs and carriages.

"Not *at* you, but *with* you," he replied.

"But why?"

"Because I'm as glad to be here as you are. And you are very glad indeed, and are showing it so delightfully." He looked frank but polite admiration of her sweet, delicate face—she liked his expression as much as she had disliked the way in which Demorest had examined her face and figure and dress.

She sighed. "But it won't last long," she said, pensively rather than sadly. She was thinking of to-morrow and the days thereafter—the days in

which she would be facing a very different aspect of the city.

"But it will last—if you resolve that it shall," he said. "Why make up your mind to the worst? Why not the best? Just keep your eyes on the present until it frowns. Then the future will be bright by contrast, and you can look at it."

"This city makes me feel painfully small and weak." Emily hid her earnestness in a light tone and smile. "And I'm not able to take myself so very seriously."

"You should be glad of that. It seems to me absurd for one to take himself seriously. It interferes with one's work. But one ought always to take his work seriously, I think, and sacrifice everything to it. Do you remember what Cæsar said to the pilot?"

"No—what was it?"

"The pilot said, 'It's too stormy to cross the Adriatic to-night. You will be drowned.' And Cæsar answered: 'It is not important whether I live or die. But it *is* important that, if I'm alive to-morrow morning, I shall be on the other shore. Let us start!' I read that story many years ago—almost as many as you've lived. It has stood me in good stead several times."

At the next slowing down, Marlowe went on:

"You're certain to win. All that one needs to do is to keep calm and not try to hurry destiny. He's sure to come into his own." He hesitated, then

added. "And I think your 'own' is going to be worth while."

They swung into the Riverside Drive—the sun was making the crest of the wooded Palisades look as if a forest fire were raging there; the Hudson, broad and smooth and still, was slowly darkening; the breeze mingled the freshness of the water and the fragrance of the trees. And Emily felt a burden, like an oppressively heavy garment, falling from her.

"What are you thinking?" asked Marlowe.

"Of Stoughton—and this," she replied.

"Was Stoughton very bad, as bad as those towns usually are to impatient young persons who wish to live before they die?"

"Worse than you can imagine—a nightmare. It seems to me that hereafter, whenever I feel low in my mind, I'll say 'Well, at least this is not Stoughton,' and be cheerful again."

They were at Clairmont, and as Emily saw the inn and its broad porches and the tables where women and men in parties and in couples were enjoying themselves, as she drank in the lively, happy scene of the summer and the city and the open air, she felt like one who is taking his first outing after an illness that thrust him down to death's door. They went round the porch and out into the gravelled open, to a table that had been reserved for them under the big tree at the edge of the bluff.

There was enough light from the electric lamps of the inn and pavilions to make the table clearly

visible, but not enough to blot out the river and the Palisades. It was not an especially good dinner and was slowly served, so Frank complained. But Emily found everything perfect, and astonished Theresa and delighted the men with her flow of high spirits. Theresa drank more, and Emily less, than her share of the champagne. As Emily had nothing in her mind which the frankness of wine could unpleasantly reveal, the contrast between her and Theresa became strongly, perhaps unjustly, marked with the progress of the "party," as Theresa called it; for Theresa, who affected and fairly well carried off a man-to-man frankness of speech, began to make remarks at which Demorest laughed loudly, Marlowe politely, and which Emily pretended not to hear. Demorest drank far too much and presently showed it by outdoing Theresa. Marlowe saw that Emily was annoyed, and insisted that he could stay no longer. This forced the return home.

As they were entering the automobile, Demorest made a politely insolent observation to Theresa on "her prim friend from New England," which Emily could not help overhearing. She flushed; Marlowe frowned contemptuously at Demorest's back.

"Don't think about him," said he to Emily, when they were under way. "He's too insignificant for such a triumph as spoiling your evening."

Emily laughed gaily. "Oh, it is a compliment to be called prim by some men," she said, "though I'd not like to be thought prim by those capable of judging."

"Only low-minded or ignorant people are prim," replied Marlowe.

"There's one thing worse," said Emily.

"And what is that?"

"Why, the mask off a mind that is usually masked by primness. I like deception when it protects me from the sight of offensive things."

At the boarding-house Marlowe got out. "Frank and I are going to supper," said Theresa to Emily. "You're coming?"

"Thanks, no," answered Emily. "I'm tired to-night."

Marlowe accompanied her up the steps and asked her to wait until he had returned from giving the key to Theresa. When he rejoined her, he said:

"If you'll come to my office to-morrow at two, I think I can get you a chance to show what you can or can't do."

Emily's eyes shone and her voice was a little uncertain as she said, after a silence:

"If you ever had to make a start and suddenly got help from some one, as I'm getting it from you, you'll know how I feel."

"I'm really not doing you a favour. If you get on, I shall have done the paper a service. If you don't, I'll simply have delayed you on your way to the work that's surely waiting for you somewhere."

"I shall insist upon being grateful," said Emily, as she gave him her hand. She was pleased that he

held it a little longer and a little more tightly than was necessary.

"I don't like his eyes," she thought, "but I do like the way he can look out of them. They must belie him."

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG A STRANGE PEOPLE.

AS the office boy, after inquiry, showed Emily into Marlowe's office on the third floor of the *Democrat* building, he was putting on his coat to receive her.

"Good morning," he said, in a business tone. "You'll forgive me. I'm in a rush to get away to Saratoga this evening—for the Republican convention. Let's go to the City Editor at once, if you please."

They went down a long hall to a door marked "News Room—Morning Edition." Marlowe held open the door and she found herself in a large room filled with desks, at many of which were men in their shirt sleeves writing. They crossed to a door marked, "City Editor." Marlowe knocked.

"Come in," an irritated voice responded," if you must. But don't stay long."

"What a bear,"said Marlowe cheerfully, not lowering his voice. "It's a lady, Bobbie. So you must sheathe your claws."

"Bobbie"—or Mr. Stilson—rose, an apology in his strong-featured, melancholy face.

"Pardon me, Miss Bromfield," he said, when he had got her name. "They've been knocking at that door all day long, and coming in and driving me half mad with their nonsense."

"Excuse me," said Marlowe, "I must get away. This is the young woman I talked to you about. Don't mind his manner, Miss Bromfield. He's a 'soft one' in reality, and puts on the burrs to shield himself. Good-bye, good luck." And he was gone, Emily noted vaguely that his manner toward "Bobbie" was a curious mixture of affection, admiration, and audacity—"like the little dog with the big one," she thought.

Emily seated herself in a chair with newspapers in it but less occupied in that way than any other horizontal part of the little office. Stilson was apparently examining her with disapproval. But as she looked directly into his eyes, she saw that Marlowe had told the truth. They were beautiful with an expression of manly gentleness. And she detected the same quality in his voice, beneath a surface tone of abruptness.

"I can't give you a salary," he said. "We start our beginners on space. We pay seven and a half a column. You'll make little at first. I hope Marlowe warned you against this business."

"No," replied Emily, doing her best to make her manner and voice pleasing. "On the contrary, he was enthusiastic."

"He ought to be ashamed of himself. However, I suppose you've got to make a living. And if a

woman must work, or thinks she must, she can't discover the superiority of matrimony at its worst more quickly in any other business."

Stilson pressed an electric button and said to the boy who came: "Tell Mr. Coleman I wish to speak to him."

A fat young man, not well shaved, his shirt sleeves rolled up and exposing a pair of muscular, hairy arms to the elbows and above, appeared in the doorway with a "Yes, sir," spoken apologetically.

"Miss Bromfield, Mr. Coleman. Here is the man who makes the assignments. He'll give you something to do. Let her have the desk in the second row next to the window, Coleman," Stilson nodded, opened a newspaper and gave it absorbed attention.

Emily was irritated because he had not risen or spoken the commonplaces of courtesy; but she told herself that such details of manners could not be kept up in the rush of business. She followed Coleman dejectedly to the table desk assigned her. He called a poorly preserved young woman of perhaps twenty-five, sitting a few rows away, and introduced her as "Miss Farwell, one of the society reporters." Emily looked at her with the same covert but searching curiosity with which she was examining Emily.

"You are new?" Miss Farwell asked.

"Very new and very frightened."

"It is terrible for us women, isn't it?" Miss Farwell's plaintive smile uncovered irregular teeth

heavily picked out with gold. "But you'll find it not so unpleasant here after you catch on. They try to make it as easy as they can for women."

Emily's thoughts were painful as she studied her fellow-journalist, "Why do women get themselves up in such rubbish?" she said to herself as she noted Miss Farwell's slovenly imitation of an imported model. "And why don't they make themselves clean and neat? and why do they let themselves get fat and pasty?" Miss Farwell's hair was in strings and thin behind the ears. Her hands were not well looked after. Her face had a shine that was glossiest on her nose and chin. Her dress, with its many loose ends of ruffle and puff, was far from fresh. She looked a discouraged young woman of the educated class. And her querulous voice, a slight stoop in her shoulders, and soft, projecting, pathetic eyes combined to give her the air of one who feels that she is out of her station, but strives to bear meekly a doom of being downtrodden and put upon. "If ever she marries," thought Emily, "she will be humbly grateful at first, and afterwards a nagger."

In the hope of seeing a less depressing object, Emily sent her glance straying about the room. The men had suspended work and were watching her with interest and frank pleasure. "No wonder," she thought, as she remembered her own neatness, the freshness and simplicity of her blue linen gown —she had been able to get it at a fashionable shop for fifty dollars because it was a model and the sell-

ing season was ended. In the far corner sat another woman. Miss Farwell, noting on whom Emily's glance paused, said: "That is Miss Gresham. She's a Vassar girl who came on the paper last year. She's a favorite with Mr. Stilson, so she gets on."

Miss Gresham looked up from her writing and Miss Farwell beckoned. Emily's spirits rose as Miss Gresham came. "This," she thought, "is nearer my ideal of an intelligent, self-respecting working woman," Miss Gresham was dressed simply but fitly—a properly made shirt waist, white and clean and completed at the neck with a French collar; a short plain black skirt that revealed presentable feet in presentable boots. She shook hands in a friendly business-like way, and Emily thought; "She would be pretty if her hair were not so severely brushed back. As it is, she is handsome—and *so* clean."

"I was just going out to lunch. Won't you come with me?" asked Miss Gresham.

"I don't know what I'm permitted to do." Emily looked toward Mr. Coleman's desk. He was watching her and now called her. As she approached, his grin became faintly flirtatious.

"Here is a little assignment for you," he said graciously, extending one of his unpleasant looking arms with a cutting from the *Evening Journal* held in the large, plump hand. As he spoke the door of Mr. Stilson's office immediately behind him opened, and Mr. Stilson appeared.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded.

Coleman jumped guiltily. "I was just going to start Miss Bromfield." His voice was a sort of wheedling whine, like that of a man persuading a fractious horse on which he is mounted and of which he is afraid.

"Let me see." Stilson took the cutting. "Won't do. Send her with Miss Gresham." And he turned away without looking at Emily or seeming conscious of her presence. But she sent a grateful glance after him. "How much more sensible," she thought, "than turning me out to wander helplessly about alone."

Miss Gresham's assignment was a national convention of women's clubs—"A tame affair," said she, "unless the delegates get into a wrangle. If men squabble and lose their tempers and make fools of themselves, it's taken as a matter of course. But if women do the very same thing in the very same circumstances, it's regarded as proof of their folly and lack of capacity."

"I suppose the men delight in seeing the women writhe under criticism," said Emily.

"Well, it isn't easy to endure criticism," replied Miss Gresham. "But it must be borne, and it does one good, whether it's just or unjust. It teaches one to realise that this world is not a hothouse."

"I wish it were—sometimes," confessed Emily. The near approach of "the struggle for existence" made her faint-hearted.

Miss Gresham could not resist a smile as she looked at Emily, in face, in dress, in manner, the

"hothouse" woman. "It could be for you, if you wished it."

"But I don't," said Emily, with sudden energy and a change of expression that brought out the strong lines of her mouth and chin, And Miss Gresham began to suspect that there were phases to her character other than sweetness and a fondness for the things immemorially feminine. "I purpose to learn to like the open air," she said, and looked it.

Miss Gresham nodded approvingly. "The open air is best, in the end. It develops every plant according to its nature. The hothouses stunt the best plants, and disguise lots of rank weeds."

As they were coming away from the convention, Miss Gresham said: "Instead of handing in your story to the City Desk, keep it, and we'll go over it together this evening, after I'm through."

"Thank you—it's so good of you to take the trouble. Yes, I'll try." Emily hesitated and grew red.

"What is it?" asked Miss Gresham, encouragingly.

"I was thinking about—this evening. I never thought of it before—do you write at night? And how do you get home?"

"Certainly I write at night. And I go home as other business people do. I take the car as far as it will take me, then I walk."

"I shall be frightened—horribly frightened."

"For a few evenings, but you'll soon be used to it.

You don't know what a relief it will be to feel free to go about alone. Of course, they're careful at the office what kind of night-assignments they give women. But I make it a point not to let them think of my sex any more than is absolutely necessary. It's a poor game to play in the end—to shirk on the plea of sex. I think most of the unpleasant experiences working-women have are due to that folly—dragging their sex into their business."

Emily felt and looked dismal as she sat at her desk, struggling to put on paper her idea of what the newspaper would want of what she had seen and heard. She wasted so many sheets of paper in trying to begin that she was ashamed to look at the heap they made on the floor beside her. Also, she felt that every one was watching her and secretly laughing at her. After three hours of wretchedness she had produced seven loosely written pages—"enough to fill columns," she thought, but in reality a scant half-column. "I begin to understand why Miss Farwell looks so mussy," she said to herself, miserably eyeing her stained hands and wilted dress, and thinking of her hair, fiercely bent upon hanging out and down. She was so nervous that if she had been alone she would have cried.

"It is impossible," she thought. "I can never do it. I'm of no account. What a weak, foolish creature I am."

She looked round, with an idea of escaping, to

hide herself and never return. But Miss Gresham was between her and the door. Besides, had she not burned her bridges behind her? She simply must, must, must make the fight.

She remembered Marlowe's story of Cæsar and the pilot—"I can't more than fail and die," she groaned, "and if I am to live, I must work." Then she laughed at herself for taking herself so seriously. She thought of Marlowe—"What would he say if he could see me now?" She went through her list of acquaintances, picturing to herself how each would look and what each would say at sight of her sitting there—a working-girl, begrimed by toil. She thought of Wayland—the contrast between her present position and what it would have been had she married him. Then she recalled the night he seized her and kissed her—her sensation of loathing, how she had taken a bath afterward and had gone to bed in the dark with her neck where he had kissed her smarting like a poisoned sore.

"You take the Madison Avenue car?" Miss Gresham interrupted, startling her so that she leaped in her chair. "We'll go together and read what you've written."

Miss Gresham went through it without changing expression. At the end she nodded reassuringly. "It's a fairly good essay. Of course you couldn't be expected to know the newspaper style."

And she went on to point out the crudities—how it might have been begun, where there might have been a few lines of description, why certain para-

graphs were too stilted, "too much like magazine literature." She gave Emily a long slip of paper on which was about a newspaper column of print. "Here's a proof of my story. I wrote it before dinner and it was set up early. Of course, it's not a model. But after you leave me you can read it over, and perhaps it may give you some points. Then you might try—not to-night, but to-morrow morning—to write your story again. That's the easiest and quickest way to catch on."

At Emily's corner Miss Gresham said, "I'll take you home this once," and left the car with her. As they went through the silent, empty street, their footsteps lightly echoing from house wall to house wall, Emily forgot her article and her other worriments in the foreboding of these midnight journeys alone. "It seems to me that I simply can't," she thought. "And yet I simply must—and of course I will. If only I had been doing it for a month, or even a week, instead of having to look forward to the first time."

Miss Gresham took her to her door, then strode away down the street—an erect, resolute figure, business-like from head to heels. Emily looked after her with rising courage, "What a brave, fine girl she is," she thought, "how intelligent, how capable. She is the kind of woman I have dreamt about."

And she went in with a lightening heart.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ORCHID HUNTER.

THE first night that Emily ventured home alone a man spoke to her before she had got twenty feet from the car tracks. She had thought that if this should happen she would faint. But when he said, "It's a pleasant evening," she put her head down and walked steadily on and told herself she was not in the least frightened. It was not until she was inside her door that her legs trembled and her heart beat fast. She sank down on the stairs in the dark and had a nervous chill. And it was a very unhappy, discouraged, self-distrustful girl that presently crept shakily up to bed.

On the second night-journey she thought she heard some one close and stealthy behind her. She broke into a run, arriving at the door out of breath and ashamed of herself. "You might have been arrested," said Miss Gresham whan Emily confessed to her. "If a policeman had seen you, he'd have thought you were flying from the scene of your crime."

A few nights afterwards a policeman did stop her. "You've got to keep out of this street," he began roughly. "I've noticed you several times now."

Instead of being humiliated or frightened, Emily became angry. "I'm a newspaper woman—on the *Democrat*," she said haughtily, and just then he got a full view of her face and of the look in her eyes.

He took off his helmet. "Beg pardon, miss," he said humbly, and with sincerity of regret. "I'm very sorry. I didn't see you distinctly. I've got a sister that does night work. I ought to a knowed better."

Emily made no reply, but went on. She was never afraid again, and after a month wondered how it had been possible for her to be afraid, and pitied women who were as timid and helpless as she had been. Whenever the policeman passed her he touched his hat. She soon noticed that it was not always the same policeman and understood that the first one had warned the entire force at the station house. Often when there were many loungers in the street the policeman turned and followed her at a respectful distance until she was home; and one rainy night he asked her to wait in the shelter of a deep doorway at the corner while he went across to a saloon and borrowed an umbrella. He gave it to her and dropped behind, coming up to get it at her door.

Thus what threatened to be her greatest trial proved no trial at all.

On the last day of her first week, Mr. Stilson sent for her and gave her an order on the cashier for twelve dollars. "Are they treating you well?" he asked, his eyes kind and encouraging.

"Yes, *you* are treating me well."

Stilson coloured.

"And I honestly don't think I've earned so much money," she went on.

"I'm not in the habit of swindling the owners of the *Democrat*," he interrupted curtly.

Emily turned away, humiliated and hurt. "He is insulting," she said to herself with flashing eyes and quivering lips. "Oh, if I did not have to endure it, I'd say things he'd not forget."

She was sitting at her desk, still fuming, when he came out of his office and looked round. As he walked toward her, she saw that he was limping painfully. "Pardon me, Miss Bromfield," he said. "I'm suffering the tortures of hell from this infernal rheumatism." And he was gone without looking at her or giving her a chance to reply.

"So, it's only rheumatism," she thought, mollified as to the rudeness, but disappointed as to the office romance of the City Editor's "secret sorrow." She did not tell Miss Gresham of the apology, but could not refrain from saying: "I have heard that Mr. Stilson is rude because he is rheumatic."

"That may have something to do with it. I remember when he got it. He was a writer then, and went down to the Oil River floods. The correspondents had to sleep on the wet ground, and endure all sorts of hardships. He was in a hospital in Pittsburg for two months. But there's something else besides rheumatism in his case. Long before that, I saw——"

Miss Gresham stopped short, seemed irritated against herself, and changed the subject abruptly.

Emily timidly joined the crowd at the cashier's window and, when her turn came, was much disconcerted by the sharp, suspicious look which the man within cast at her. She signed and handed in her order. He searched through the long rows of envelopes in the pay drawer—searched in vain. Another suspicious look at her and he began again. "I'm not to get it after all" she thought with a sick, sinking feeling—how often afterward she remembered those anxious moments and laughed at herself. The cashier's man searched on and presently drew out an envelope. Again that sharp look and he handed her the money. She could not restrain a deep sigh of relief.

She went home in triumph to Theresa and displayed the ten dollar bill and the two ones as if they were the proofs of a miracle. "It's a thrilling sensation," she said, "to find that I can really do something for which somebody will pay." She remembered Stilson's rudeness. "It was not so bad after all," she thought. "He convinced me that I had really earned the money. If he'd been polite I should have feared he was giving it to me out of good-nature."

"Oh, you're getting on all right," said Theresa. "I saw Marlowe last night at Delmonico's. Frank and I were dining there, and he stopped to speak to us. I asked him about you, and—shall I tell you just what he said?"

"I want to know the worst."

"Well, he said—of course, I asked about you the first thing—and he said that he and your City Editor had been dining at the Lotos Club—Mr. Stilson, isn't it? And Mr. Stilson said: 'If she wasn't so good-looking, there might be a chance of her becoming a real person.' Marlowe says that's a high compliment for Mr. Stilson, because he is mad on the subject of idle, useless women and men. And, Mr. Stilson went on to say that you had judgment and weren't vain, and that you had as much patience and persistence as Miss—I forget her name——"

"Was it Gresham?" asked Emily.

"No—that wasn't the name. Was it Tarheel or Farheel or Farville—no—it was——"

"Oh." Emily looked disappointed and foolish. She had seen Miss Farwell an hour before—patient and persevering indeed, but frowzier and more "put upon" than ever.

"Yes—Miss Farwell. Who is she?"

"One of the women down at the office," Emily said, and hurried on with: "What else did Marlowe say?"

"That's all, except that he wanted us four to dine together soon. When can you go—on a Sunday?"

"No, Monday—that's my free day. I took it because it is also Miss Gresham's day off. She's the only friend I've made down town thus far."

Marlowe came to Emily's desk one morning in her third week on the *Democrat*. "What did you

have in the paper to-day?" he asked, after he had explained that he was just returned from Washington and Chicago.

"A few paragraphs," she replied, drawing a space slip from a drawer and displaying three small items pasted one under the other.

"Not startling, are they?" was Marlowe's comment. "I've asked Miss Duncan to bring you to dine with Demorest and me—the postponed dinner. But I'd rather dine with you alone. I don't think Demorest shines in your society; then, too, we can talk shop. I've a great deal to say to you, and I think I can be of some use. We could dine in the open air up at the Casino—don't you like dining in the open air?"

Emily had been brought up under the chaperon system. While she had no intention of clinging to it, she hesitated now that the occasion for beginning the break had come. Also, she remembered what Marlowe had said to her at her door. She wished that she were going unchaperoned with some other man first.

"There's a prejudice against the Casino among some conventional people," he said. "But that does not apply to us."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that," and she accepted.

She asked Miss Gresham about him a few hours afterward.

"You've met Mr. Marlowe?" she said, in a cordial tone. "Don't you think him clever? You

may hear some gossip about him—and women. He's good looking, and—and much like all men in one respect. He's the sort of man that is suspected of affairs, but whose name is never coupled with any particular woman's. That's a good sign, don't you think? It shows that the gossip isn't started or encouraged by him."

"Is it—proper for me to go to dinner with him alone?"

"Why not? Of course, if they see you, they may talk about you. But what does that matter? It would be different if you were waiting with folded hands for some man to come along and undertake to support you for life. Then gossip might damage your principal asset. But now your principal asset isn't reputation for conventionality, but brains. And you don't have to ask favours of anybody."

Marlowe and Emily had a table at the end of the walk parallel with the entrance-drive. The main subject of conversation was Emily—what she had done, what she could do, and how she could do it. "All that I'm saying is general," he said. "I'll help you to apply it, if I may. There's no reason why you should not be doing well—making at least forty dollars a week—within six months. We'll get up some Sunday specials together to help you on faster. The main point is a new way of looking at whatever you're writing about. Your good taste will always save you from being flat or silly, even when you're not brilliant."

While Marlowe talked, Emily observed, as accurately as it is possible for a young person to observe when the person under observation is good-looking, young, of the opposite sex, and when both are, consciously and unconsciously, doing their utmost to think well each of the other. He had a low, agreeable voice, and an unusually attractive mouth. His mind was quick, his manner simple and direct. Although he was clearly younger than thirty-five, his hair was sprinkled with gray at the temples, and there were wrinkles in his forehead and at the corners of his eyes. He made many gestures, and she liked to watch his hands—the hands of an athlete, but well-shaped.

"I ride and swim almost every day," he said incidentally to some discussion about the sedentary life. And she knew why he looked in perfect health. Emily admired him, liked him, with the quick confidence of youth trusted him, before they had been talking two hours. And it pleased her to see admiration of her in his eyes, and to feel that he was physically and mentally glad to be near her.

As they were drinking champagne (slightly modified by apollinaris), the acquaintance progressed swiftly. It would have been all but impossible for her to resist the contagion of his open-mindedness, had she been so inclined. But she herself had rapidly changed in her month in New York. She felt that she was able to meet a man on his own ground now, and that she understood men far

better, and she seemed to herself to be seeing life in a wholly new aspect—its aspect to the self-reliant and free. She helped him to hasten through those anterooms to close acquaintaince, where, as he put it, "stupid people waste most of their time and all their chances for happiness."

He had a way of complimenting her which was peculiarly insidious. He was talking earnestly about her work, his mind apparently absorbed. Abruptly he interrupted himself with, "Don't mind my talking so much. It's happiness. One is not often happy. And I feel to-night"—this with raillery in his voice—"like an orchid hunter who has been dragging himself through jungles for days and is at last rewarded with the sight of a new and wonderful specimen—high up in a difficult tree, but still, perhaps, accessible." And then he went on to discuss orchids with her and told a story of an acquaintance, a half-mad orchid-hunter—all with no further reference to her personality.

It was not until they were strolling through the Park toward Fifty-ninth street that the subject which is sure to appear sooner or later in such circumstances and conjunctions started from cover and fluttered into the open.

He glanced at the moon. "It would be impossible to improve upon that nice old lady up there as a chaperon, wouldn't it?"

"I'm not sure that I'd give my daughter into her charge," said Emily.

"Why do you say that?"

"Oh, I think it all depends upon the woman."

"Any woman who couldn't be trusted with the moon as a chaperon, either wouldn't be safe with any chaperon or wouldn't be worth saving from the consequences of her own folly."

"Possibly. But—I confess I wouldn't trust even myself implicitly to that old lady up there, as you call her."

"But you are doing so this evening."

"Mercy, no. I've two other guardians—myself and you."

"Thank you for including me. I'm afraid I don't deserve it."

"Then I'll try to arrange it so that I sha'n't have to call you in to help me."

"Would you think me very absurd if I told you, in the presence of your chaperon, that"—His look made her's waver for an instant—"I must have my orchid?"

"Not absurd," replied Emily. "But abrupt and——"

"And—what?"

"And"—She laughed. "And interesting."

"There's only a short time to live," he answered, "and I'm no longer so young as I once was. But I don't wish to hurry you. I don't expect any answer now—it would be highly improper, even if your answer were ready." He looked at her with a very agreeable audacity. "And I'm not sure that it isn't ready. But I can wait. I simply spoke my own mind, as soon as I saw that it would not be disagreeable to you to hear it."

"How did you know that?"

"Instinct, pure instinct. No sensitive man ever failed to know whether a woman found him tolerable or intolerable."

"Don't think," said Emily, seriously but not truthfully, "that I'm taking your remark as a tribute to myself. I understand that you are striving to do what is expected of a man on such a night as this."

"Does one have to tear his hair, and foam at the mouth, in order to convince you?" asked Marlowe, his eyes laughing, yet earnest too.

"Yes," said Emily calmly. "Begin—please."

"No—I've said enough, for the evening." He was walking close to her, and there was no raillery in either his tone or his eyes. "It's so new and wonderful a sensation to me, that as yet, just the pleasure of it is all that I ask."

"But you don't fit in with my plans—not at all," she said, in a way that must have been encouraging since it was not in the least discouraging. "I'm a working woman, and must not bother with—with orchid hunters."

"Your plans? Oh!" He laughed, "Let me help you revise them." He saw her face change. "Or rather," he quickly corrected, "let me help you realise them."

They were to join Theresa and Frank at the New York roof-garden. Just before they entered the street doors, he said: "I think there are only two things in the world worth living for—work and

love. And I think neither is perfect without the other. Perhaps—who knows?—"

Her answering look was not directed toward him, but it was none the less an answer. It made him feel that they were both happy in the anticipation of greater happiness imminent.

CHAPTER X.

FURTHER EXPLORATION.

WHEN Emily came into the sitting-room the next morning at ten she found that Theresa had ordered breakfast for both sent there, and was waiting. She was in a dressing-gown, her hair twisted in a careless knot, her eyes tired and clouded. The air was tainted with the sweet, stale, heavy perfume which was an inseparable part of her personality. "I wish Theresa wouldn't use that scent," thought Emily—her first thought always when she came near Theresa or into any place where Theresa had recently been.

"How well you have slept," began Theresa, looking with good-natured envy at Emily's fresh face and fresh French shirt-waist.

"Not very," replied Emily. "I was awake until nearly daylight."

"Did you hear me come in?"

"I heard you moving about your room just as I was going to sleep." Emily knew Theresa's mode of life. But she avoided seeming to know, and ignored Theresa's frequent attempts to open the subject of herself and Frank. She thought she had gone far enough when she made it clear that she was not sitting in judgment upon her.

"I'm blue—desperately blue," continued Theresa. "I don't know which way to turn." There was a long pause, then with a flush she looked at Emily and dropped her uneasy eyes. "How——"

"I think it most unwise," interrupted Emily, "to confide one's private affairs to any other, and I know it's most impertinent for any other to peer into them."

"You're right—but I've got to talk it over with some one."

"I hope you won't tell me more than is absolutely necessary, Theresa."

"Well—I'm 'up against it'—to use the kind of language that fits such a vulgar muddle. And I've neglected my business until there's nothing left of it." A long pause, then in a strained voice: "I've been planning all along to marry Frank Demorest and—I find not only that he wouldn't marry me if he could, but couldn't if he would. He's going to marry money. He's got to. He told me frankly last night. He's down to less than ten thousand a year, about a third of what it costs him to live. And he's living up his principal."

"This is the saddest tale of privation and poverty I ever heard," said Emily. Then more seriously: "You're not in love with him?"

"Well—he's good looking; he knows the world; he has the right sort of manners, and goes with the right sort of people, and he comes of a splendid old family."

"His father kept a drygoods shop, didn't he?"

"Yes—but that was when Frank was a young man. And it was a big shop—wholesale, you know—not retail. He never worked in it or anywhere else. You could tell that he'd never worked, but had always been a gentleman, and only looked after the property."

"I understand," Emily nodded with great solemnity. "We'll concede that he's a gentleman. What next?"

"Well, I wanted to marry him. It would have been satisfactory in every way. I'd have got back my position in society that we had to give up when father lost everything and—and died—and mother wanted to drag me off to live in Blue Mountain. Just think of it—Blue Mountain, Vermont!"

"I am thinking of it—or, rather, of Stoughton," said Emily, with a shiver.

"And I simply wouldn't go. I went to work instead.—But—well—I'm too lazy to work. I couldn't—and I can't. I can talk about it and pretend about it—but I can't *do* it. And now I've got to choose between work and Blue Mountain once more."

"But you had that choice before, and you didn't go to Blue Mountain. Why are you so cut up now?"

"I've been skating on thin ice these last four years. And I've begun to think about the future."

"How could I advise you? I can only say that you do well to think seriously about what you're to do—if you won't work."

"I can't, I simply can't, work. It's so common, so—Oh, I don't see it as you do, as I was trying to make believe I saw it when I first talked to you. I feel degraded because I am not as we used to be. I want a big house and lots of servants and social position. You don't know how low I feel in a street car. You don't know how wretched I am when I am in the Waldorf or Sherry's or driving in the Park in a hired hansom, or when I see the carriages in the evening with the women on their way to swell dinners or balls. You don't know how I despise myself, how I have despised myself for the last four years. No wonder Frank wouldn't marry me. He'd have been a fool to." The tears were rolling down Theresa's face.

It was impossible for Emily not to sympathize with a grief so genuine. "Poor girl," she thought, "she can no more help being a snob than she can help being a brunette." And she said aloud in a gentle voice: "What have you thought of doing?"

"I've got to marry," answered Theresa. "And marry quick. And marry money."

A queer look came into Emily's face at this restatement of her own attempted solution of the Stoughton problem. Theresa misunderstood the look. "You are so unsympathetic," she said, lighting a cigarette.

Emily was putting on her hat. "No—not unsympathetic," she replied. "Anything but that. Only—you are healthy and strong and capable, Theresa. Why should you sell yourself?"

"Oh, I know—you imagine you think it fine and dignified to work for one's living. But in the bottom of your heart you know better. You know it is not refined and womanly—that it means that a woman has been beaten, has been unable to get a man to support her as a lady should be supported."

Emily faced her and, as she put on her gloves, said in a simple, good-tempered way: "I admit that I'm conventional enough at times and discouraged enough at times to feel that it would be a temptation if some man—not too disagreeable—were to offer to take care of me for life. But I'm trying to outgrow it, trying to come up to a new ideal of self-respect. And I believe, Theresa, that the new ideal is better for us. Anyhow in the circumstances, it's certainly wiser and—and safer."

"What are you going to do about Marlowe?" Theresa thrust at her with deliberate suddenness and some malice.

Emily kept the colour out of her face, but her eyes betrayed to Theresa that the thrust had reached. "Well, what about Marlowe?" She decided to drop evasion and was at once free from embarrassment.

"He'll not marry you. He isn't a marrying man."

"And why should he marry me? And why should I marry him? I have no wish to be tied. It was necessity that forced me to be free; but I know more certainly every day that it isn't neces-

sity that will keep me free. You see, Theresa, I don't hate work, as you do. I feel that every one has to work anyhow, and I prefer to work for myself and be paid for it, rather than to be some man's housekeeper and get my wages as if they were charity."

"If I married, you may be sure I'd be no man's housekeeper," said Theresa, with a toss of the head.

"I was making the position as dignified as possible. Suppose you found after marriage that you didn't care for your husband; or suppose you deliberately married for money. I should say that mere housekeeper would be enviable in comparison."

"There's a good deal of pretence about that, isn't there, honestly?" Theresa was laughing disagreeably. "It's a thoroughly womanish remark. But it's a remark to make to a man, not when two women who understand woman-nature are talking quietly, with no man to overhear."

"Certainly I've known a great many women, nice women, who seemed to be living quite comfortably and contentedly with husbands they did not in the least like. And I am no better, no more sensitive than other women. Still—I feel as I say. Let's call it a masculine quality in me. I doubt if there are many husbands who live with wives they don't like—like a little for the time, at any rate."

"I've often thought of that. It's the most satisfactory thing about being a woman and having a man in love with one. One knows, as a man never

can know about a woman, that he means at least part of it. But you ought to be at your beloved office. You don't think I'm so horribly horrid, do you?"

Emily stood behind Theresa and put her arms around her shoulders. "You've a right to feel about yourself and do with yourself as you please," she said. "And in the ways that are important to me, you are the most generous, helpful girl in the world."

"Well, I don't believe I'm mean. But what is a woman to do in such a hard world?"

"Go to the office," said Emily. She patted Theresa's cheek encouragingly. "Put off being blue, dear, until the last minute. Then perhaps you won't need to be blue or won't have time. Good-bye!"

What *was* she going to do about Marlowe? She began to think of it as she left the house, and she was still debating it as she entered the *Democrat* building and saw him waiting for the elevator.

"Just whom I wish to see," he began. "No, not for that reason—altogether," he went on audaciously answering her thought, as if she had spoken it or looked it, when she had done neither. "This is business. I'm going to Pittsburg to get specials on the strike. Canfield's sending you along."

"Why?" Resentment was rising in her. How could he, how dare he, advertise her to the Managing Editor thus falsely?—"Why should he send me?"

"Because I asked him. He opposed it, but I finally persuaded him. I wanted you for my own sake. Incidentally I saw that it was a chance for you. I laid it on rather strong about your talents, and so you've simply got to give a good account of yourself."

"I cannot go," she said coldly. "It's impossible."

They went into the elevator. "Come up to the Managing Editor's office with me," he said. He motioned her into a seat in Canfield's anteroom and sat beside her. "What is the matter?" he asked. "Let us never be afraid to tell each other the exact truth."

"How could I go out there alone with you? The whole office, everybody we meet there, would be talking about us."

"I see," he said with raillery. "You thought I had sacrificed your reputation in my eagerness to get you within easy reach of my wiles? Well, perhaps I might have done it in some circumstances. But in this case that happens not to have been my idea. I remembered what you have for the moment forgotten—that you are on the staff of the *Democrat*. I got you the assignment to do part of this strike. My private reasons for doing so are not in the matter at all. You may rest assured that, if I had not thought you'd send good despatches and make yourself stronger on the paper and justify my insistence, I should not have interfered."

She sat silent, ashamed of the exhibition of vanity

and suspicion into which she had been hurried. "I beg your pardon," she said at last.

"I love you," he answered in a low voice. "And those three little words mean more to me—than I thought they could mean. Let us go in to see Canfield."

"I don't in the least trust Marlowe's judgment about you, now that I've seen you," said Mr. Canfield—polite, pale, thin of face, with a sharp nose; his dark circled eyes betrayed how restlessly and sleeplessly his mind prowled through the world in the daily search for the newest news. "But my own judgment is gone too. So if you please, go to Furnaceville for us." He dropped his drawing-room tone and poured out a flood of instructions—"Send us what you see—what you really see. If you see misery, send it. If not, for heaven's sake, don't 'fake' it. Put humour in your stuff—all the humour you possibly can—'fake' that, if necessary. But it won't be necessary, if you have real eyes. Go to the workmen's houses. Look all through them—parlours, bedrooms, kitchen. Look at the grocer's bills and butcher's. Tell what their clothes cost. Describe their children. Talk to their children. Make us see just what kind of people these are that are making such a stir. You've a great opportunity. Don't miss it. And don't, don't, don't, do 'fine writing.' No 'literature'—just life—men, women, children. Here's an order for a hundred dollars. If you run short, Marlowe will telegraph you more."

"Then we don't go together after all?" she said to Marlowe, as they left Canfield's office.

"I'm sorry you're to be disappointed," he replied, mockingly. "I stay in Pittsburg for the present. You go out to the mills—out to Furnaceville first."

"Where the militia are?"

"Yes—they're expecting trouble there next week. I'll probably be on in a day or so. But I must see several people in Pittsburg first. You'll have the artist with you, though. Try to keep him sober. But if he *will* get drunk, turn him adrift. He'll only hamper you."

Emily was in a fever as she cashed the order and went up town to pack a small trunk and catch the six o'clock train. Going on an important mission thus early in her career as a working-woman would have been exciting enough, however quiet the occasion. But going among militia and rioters, going unchaperoned with two men, going the wildest part of the excursion with one man and he an artist of unsteady habits who would need watching—she could not grasp it. However, an hour after they were settled in the Pullman, she had forgotten everything except the work she was to do—or fail to do. Indeed, it had already begun. Marlowe brought with him a big bundle of newspapers, and a boy from the *Democrat's* Philadelphia office came to the station there, and gave him another and bigger bundle.

"I'm reading up," said Marlowe, "and it won't do you any harm to do the same. Then, when we

arrive, we'll know all that's been going on, and we'll be able to step right into it without delay."

The artist went to the smoking compartment. She and Marlowe attacked the papers. Both read until dinner, and again after dinner until the berths were made. When they talked it was of the strike. Marlowe neither by word nor by look indicated that he was conscious of any but a purely professional bond between them. And she soon felt as he acted—occasionally hoping that *he* did not altogether feel as he acted, but was restraining himself through fine instinct.

When they separated at Pittsburg, and she and the artist were on the way in the chill morning to the train for Furnaceville, she remembered that he had not shown the slightest anxiety about the peril into which she was going—and going by his arrangement. But she was soon deep in the Pittsburg morning papers, her mind absorbed in the battle between brain-workers and brawn-workers of which she was to be a witness. She was impatient to arrive, impatient to carry out the suggestions which her imagination had evolved from what she had been reading. To her the strike, with its anxieties and perils for thousands, meant only her own opportunity, as she noted with some self-reproach.

"I hope they'll get licked," said the artist.

"Who?" asked Emily, looking at him more carefully than she had thus far, and remembering that he had not been introduced to her and that she did not know his name.

"The workingmen, of course," he replied. "I know them. My father was one of 'em. I came from this neighbourhood."

"I should think your sympathies would be with them." Emily was coldly polite. She did not like the young man's look of coarse dissipation—dull eyes, clouded skin, and unhealthy lips and teeth.

"That shows you don't know them. They are the most unreasonable lot, and if they had the chance they'd be brutal tyrants. They have no respect for brains."

"But they might be right in this case. I don't say that they are. It's so difficult to judge what is right and what wrong."

"You may be sure they're wrong. My father was always wrong. Why, if he and his friends had been able to carry out all they used to talk, the whole world would be a dead level of savages. They used to call everybody who didn't do manual labour a 'parasite on the toiling masses.' As if the toiling masses would have any toiling to do to enable them to earn bread and comfortable homes for themselves if it were not for the brain-workers."

"Oh, it seems to me that we're all toilers together, each in his own way. Perhaps it's because I'm too stupid to understand it, but I don't think much of theories about these things."

The train stopped, the brakeman shouted, "Furnaceville!" Emily and the artist descended to the station platform, there to be eyed searchingly by a crowd of roughly dressed men with scowling faces.

When the train had moved on without discharging the load of non-union workers they were expecting, their faces relaxed and they became a cheerful crowd of Americans. They watched the "lady from the city," with respectful, fascinated side-glances. Those nearest her looked aimlessly but earnestly about, as if hoping to see or to imagine some way of being of service to her. Through the crowd pushed a young man, whom Emily at once knew was of the newspaper profession.

"Is this Miss Bromfield?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Emily, "from the New York *Democrat*."

"My name is Holyoke. I'm the Pittsburg correspondent of the *Democrat*. Mr. Marlowe telegraphed me to meet you and see that you did not get into any danger, and also to engage rooms for you."

Emily beamed upon Mr. Holyoke. Marlowe *had* thought of her—had been anxious about her. And instead of saying so, he had acted. "Thank you so much," she said. "This gentleman is from the *Democrat* also."

"My name is Camp," said the artist, making a gesture toward the unwieldy bundle of drawing sheets wrapped flat which he carried under his arm.

"I have arranged for you at the Palace Hotel," continued Holyoke. "Don't build your hopes too high on that name. I took back-rooms on the second floor because the hotel is just across an open space from the entrance to the mills."

Emily thought a moment on this location and its reason, then grew slightly paler. Holyoke looked at her with the deep sympathy which a young man must always feel for the emotions of a young and good-looking woman. "If there is any trouble, it'll be over quickly once it begins," he said, "and you can easily keep out of the way."

They climbed a dreary, rough street, lined with monotonous if comfortable cottages. It was a depressing town, as harsh as the iron by which all of its inhabitants lived. "People ought to be well paid to live in such a place as this," said Emily.

"I don't see how they stand it," Holyoke replied. "But the local paper has an editorial against the militia this morning, and it speaks of the town as 'our lovely little city, embowered among the mountains, the home of beauty and refinement.'"

The Palace was a three-story country-town hotel, with the usual group of smoking and chewing loungers impeding the entrance. Emily asked Holyoke to meet her in the small parlour next to the office in half an hour.

CHAPTER XI.

SEEN FROM A BARRICADED WINDOW.

SHE was in the parlour when Holyoke returned. The loungers and her fellow-guests had been wandering through the room to inspect her—"the lady writer from New York." She herself was absorbed in the view of the mills rising above a stockade fence not five hundred feet away, across a flagged public square. There were three entrances, and up and down in front of each marched a soldier with a musket at shoulder-arms. In each entrance Emily saw queer-looking little guns on wheels. Their tubes and mountings flashed in the sunlight.

"What kind of cannon are those?" she asked.

"They're machine-guns," explained Holyoke. "You put in a belt full of cartridges, aim the muzzle at the height of a man's middle or calves as the case may be. Then you turn the crank and the muzzle waggles to and fro across the line of the mob and begins to sputter out bullets—about fifteen hundred a minute. And down go the rioters like wheat before a scythe. They're beauties—those guns."

Emily looked from Holyoke to the guns, but she could not conceive his picture. It seemed

impossible that this scene of peace, of languor, could be shifted to a scene of such terror as some of the elements in it ought to suggest. How could these men think of killing each other? Why should that soldier from the other end of the State leave his home to come and threaten to shoot his fellow citizen whom he did not know, whose town he had not seen until yesterday, and in whose grievance, real or fancied, he had no interest or part? She felt that this was the sentimental, unreasoning, narrow view to take. But now that she was face to face with the possibility of bloodshed, broad principles grew vague, unreal; and the actualities before her eyes and filling her horizon seemed all-important.

She and Holyoke wandered about the town, he helping her quickly to gather the materials for her first "special," her impression of the town and its people and their feelings and of the stockaded mills with the soldiers and guns—her supplement to the strictly news account Holyoke would send. Camp accompanied them, making sketches. He went back to the hotel in advance of them to draw several large pictures to be sent by the night mail that they might reach New York in time for the paper of the next day but one. Toward four o'clock Emily shut herself in her room, and began her first article.

An hour of toil passed and she had not yet made a beginning. She was wrought to a high pitch of nervous terror. "Suppose I should fail utterly?

Can it be possible that I shall be unable to write anything at all?" The floor was strewn with sheets of paper, a sentence, a few sentences—failed beginnings—written on each. Her hands were grimed with lead dust from sharpened and resharpened pencils. There was a streak of black on her left cheek. Her hair was coming down—as it seemed to her, the forewarning of complete mental collapse. She rose and paced the floor in what was very nearly an agony of despair.

There was a knock and she opened the door to take in a telegram. It was from the Managing Editor:

If there should be trouble to-night, please help Holyoke all you can. Do not be afraid of duplicating his stuff.

The Democrat.

This put her in a panic. She began to sob hysterically. "What possessed Marlowe to drag me into this scrape? And they expect me to do a man's work! Oh, how could I have been such a fool as to undertake this? I can't do it! I shall be disgraced!"

She washed her face and hands and put her hair in order. She was so desperate that her sense of humour was not aroused by the sight of her absurdly tragic expression. She sat at the table and began again. She had just written:

"The shining muzzles of six machine-guns and the spotless new uniforms of the three soldiers that march up and down on guard at the mill stockade are the most conspicuous——"

when there was a knock and her door was flung open. She started up, her eyes wide with alarm, her cheeks blanched, her lips apart, her throat ready to release a scream. It was only Holyoke.

"Beg pardon," he gasped out. "No time for ceremony. The company is bringing a gang of 'scabs' through the mountains on foot. The strikers are on to it. There'll be a fight sure. Don't stir out of your room, no matter what you hear. If the hotel's in any danger, I'll let you know. Camp'll be looking out for you too—and the other newspaper boys. As soon as it's over, I'll come. Sit tight—remember!"

He rushed away. Emily looked at her chaos of failures. Of what use to go on now—now, when real events were impending? From her window she could see several backyards. In one, three children were making mud pies and a woman was hanging out the wash—blue overalls, red flannel, and cheap muslin underclothes, polkadot cotton slips and dresses in many sizes, yarn stockings and socks, white and gray.

Crack!

The woman paused with one leg of a pair of overalls unpinned. The children straightened up, feeling for each other with mud-bedaubed hands. Emily felt as if her ears were about to burst with the strain of the silence.

Crack! Crack! Crack! An answering volley of oaths. A scream of derision and rage from a mob.

The children fled into the house. The woman

gathered in a great armful of clothes from the line as if a rain storm had suddenly come. She ran, entangled in her burden, her thick legs in drab stockings interfering one with the other. Emily jumped to her feet.

"I cannot stay here," she exclaimed. "I must *see!*"

She flew down the hall to the front of the house. There was a parlour and Camp's paper and drawing materials were scattered about. He was barricading a window with the bedding from a room to the rear. He glanced at her. "Go back!" he said in a loud, harsh voice. "This is no place for a woman."

"But it's just the place for a reporter," she replied. "I'll help you."

They arranged the mattresses so that, sheltered by them and the thick brick wall, they could peer out of the window from either side.

The square was empty. The gates in the stockade were closed. In each of the barricaded upper windows of the mill appeared the glittering barrels of several rifles at different heights,

"See that long, low building away off there to the left?" said Camp. "The 'scabs' and their militia guard are behind it. The strikers are in the houses along this side of the street.'

Crack! A bullet crashed into the mirror hanging on the rear wall of their parlour. It had cut a clean hole through the window pane without shivering it and had penetrated the mattresses as if they had been a single thickness of paper.

"Now will you go back to your room?" angrily shouted Camp, although he was not three feet from her.

"Why are they firing at the hotel?" was Emily's reply.

"Bad aim—that's all. The strikers aren't here. That must have been an answer to a bullet from next door. The soldiers shoot whenever a striker shows himself to aim."

Crack! There was a howl of derision in reply. "That's the way they let the soldiers know it was a close shot but a miss," said Camp.

A man ran from behind a building to the right and in front of the stockade, and started across the open toward where the strikers were entrenched. He was a big, rough-looking fellow. As he came, Emily could see his face—dark, scowling, set.

Crack!

The man ran more swiftly. There was a howl of delight from the strikers. But, a few more leaps and he stumbled, flung up his hands, pitched forward, fell, squirmed over so that he lay face upward. His legs and arms were drawing convulsively up against his body and shooting out to their full length again. His face was twisting and grew shiny with sweat and froth. A stream of blood oozed from under him and crawled in a thin, dark rivulet across the flagging to a crack, then went no further. He turned his face, a wild appeal for help in it, toward the house whence he had come.

At once from behind that shelter ran a second

man, younger than the first. He had a revolver in his right hand. Emily could plainly see his clinched jaws, his features distorted with fury. His lips were drawn back from his teeth like an angry bulldog's.

"He's a madman!" shrieked Camp. "He can do nothing!"

"He's a hero," panted Emily.

Crack!

He stopped short. Emily saw his face change in expression—from fury to wonder, from wonder to fear, from fear to a ghastly, green-white pallor of pain and hate. He tossed his arms high above his head. The revolver flew from his hand. Then, within a few feet of the still-twitching body of the other, he crashed down. The blood spurted from his mouth, drenching his face. He worked himself over and around, half rose, wiped his face with his sleeve, fell back. Emily saw that he was looking toward the shelter, his features calm—a look of love and longing, a look of farewell for some one concealed there.

And now a third figure ran from the shelter into that zone of death—a boyish figure, lithe and swift. As it came nearer she saw that it was a youth, a mere lad, smooth faced, with delicate features. He too carried a revolver, but the look in his face was love and anguish.

Crack!

The boy flung the revolver from him and ran on. One arm was swinging limp. Now he was at the

side of the second man. He was just kneeling, just stretching out his hand toward the dear dead—

Crack!

He fell forward, his arm convulsively circling the head of his beloved. As he fell, his hat slipped away and a mass of brown hair uncoiled and showered down, hiding both their faces.

"Oh!" Emily drew back, sick and trembling. She glanced at Camp. He looked like a maniac. His eyes bulged, bloodshot. His nostrils stood out stiff. His long yellow teeth were grinding and snapping.

"God damn them!" he shrieked. "God damn the hell-hounds of the capitalists! Murderers! Murderers! killing honest workingmen and women!"

And as Emily crouched there, too weak to lift herself, yet longing to see those corpse-strewn, blood-stained stones—the stage of that triple tragedy of courage, self-sacrifice, love and death—Camp raved on, poured out curses upon capitalists and militia. Camp!—who that very morning had been trying to impress Emily with his superiority to his origin, his contempt of these "mere machines for the use of men of brains."

CHAPTER XII.

A RISE AND A FALL.

WHEN Emily looked again two of the strikers, one waving a white rag at the end of a pole, were advancing toward the limp bodies in the centre of the square. They made three trips. Neither shots nor shouts broke the silence. Soon the only evidences of the tragedy were the pools and streaks of blood on the flagging.

Camp was once more at his drawing, rapidly outlining a big sketch of the scene they had witnessed. "Good stuff, wasn't it?" he said, looking up with an apologetic grin and flush. "It couldn't have been better if it had been fixed for a theatre."

"It'll make a good story," replied Emily, struggling with some success to assume the calmly professional air and tone. "I'm going to my room. If I hear any more shots, I'll come again. When Mr. Holyoke returns, please tell him I'd like to see him."

She had rushed through that hall an hour before, a panic-stricken girl. She returned a woman, confident of herself. She had seen; she had felt; she had lived. She sat at her table, and, with little hesitation, wrote. When she had been at work an hour and a half, Holyoke interrupted her.

"Oh, I see you're busy," he began.

"I wanted to say," said Emily, "that I shall send a little about the trouble a while ago—quite independently of the news, you know. So, just write as if I were not here at all."

"All right. They'll want every line we can both send." Holyoke looked at her with friendly anxiety. "You look tired," he said, "as if you'd been under a strain. It must have been an awful experience for you, sitting here. Don't bother to write anything. I'll sign both our names to my despatch."

"Thank you, but I couldn't let you do that. What were the names of those people who were killed out in the square?"

"They were a puddler named Jack Farron, and his son Tom, and Tom's wife. Tom got married only last week. She insisted on going out with him. They had been scouting, and had news that the militia were moving to take the strikers from the rear and rout them out of their position. You heard about the shooting?"

"No—I saw it," said Emily. "Mr. Camp and I watched from the parlour window. Is there going to be more trouble?"

"Not for a good many hours. The 'scabs' retreated, and won't come back until they're sure the way is clear."

Emily took up her pencil and looked at her paper. "I'll call again later," said Holyoke, as he departed. "You can file your despatch downstairs. The Postal telegraph office is in the hotel."

She wrote about four thousand words, and went over her "copy" carefully three times. It did not please her, but she felt that she had told the facts, and that she had avoided "slopping over"—the great offence against which every newspaper man and woman who had given her advice had warned her. She filed the despatch at nine o'clock.

"We can put it on the wire at once," said the telegraph manager. "We'll get a loop straight into the *Democrat* office. We knew you people would be flocking here, and so we provided against a crush. We've got plenty of wires and operators."

Emily ate little of the dinner that had been saved for her, and at each sudden crash from the kitchen where noisy servants were washing dishes, her nerves leaped and the blood beat heavily against her temples. She went back to the little reception room and stood at the window, looking out into the square. In the bright moonlight she saw the soldiers marching up and down before the entrance to the stockade. The open space between it and her was empty, and the soft light flooded round the great dark stains which marked the site of the tragedy.

"Why aren't you in bed?" It was Marlowe's voice, and it so startled her that she gave a low cry and clasped her clinched hands against her breast. She had been thinking of him. The death of those lovers, its reminder of the uncertainty of life and of the necessity of seizing happiness before it should escape forever, had brought him, or, rather, love with him as the medium, vividly into her mind.

"You frightened me—I'm seeing ghosts to-night," she said. "How did you reach here when there is no train?"

"Several of us hired a special and came down—just an engine and tender. We fancied there might be more trouble. But it's all over. The Union knows it can't fight the whole State, and the Company is very apologetic for the killing of those people, especially the woman. Still, her death may have saved a long and bloody strike. That must have been an awful scene this afternoon." He was talking absently. His eyes, his thoughts were upon her, slender, pale, yet golden.

Emily briefly described what she had seen.

"It's a pity you didn't telegraph an account of it. Your picture of it would have been better than Holyoke's, even if you didn't see the shooting."

"But I *did* see it!"

Marlowe's look became dazed. "What?" he said. "How? Where were you?"

"Upstairs—in the parlour. I was so fascinated that I forgot to be afraid. And a bullet came through the window."

He made a gesture as if to catch her in his arms. Instead he took her hands and kissed them passionately.

"I never dreamed you would be actually in danger," he said pleadingly. "I was heedless—I—heedless of you—you who are everything to me. Forgive me, dear."

She leaned against the casement, her eyes fixed

dreamily upon the sky, the moonlight making her face ethereal.

"Was I too abrupt?" he asked. "Have I offended in saying it again at this time?" His exaggerated, nervous anxiety struck him as absurd, for him, but he admitted that his unprecedented fear of what a woman might think of him was real.

"No," she answered. "But—I must go. I'm very tired. And I'm beginning to feel queer and weak." She put out her hand. "Good-night," she said, her eyes down and her voice very low.

When she was in her room she half-staggered to the bed. "I'll rest a moment before I undress," she thought, and lay down. She did not awaken until broad daylight. She looked at her watch. "Ten minutes to twelve—almost noon!" she exclaimed. She had been asleep twelve hours. As she took a bath and dressed again, she was in high spirits. "It's good to be alive," she said to herself, "to be alive, to be young, to be free, to be loved, and to—to like it."

Was she in love with Marlowe? She thought so —or, at least, she was about to be. But she did not linger upon that. The luxury of being loved in a way that made her intensely happy was enough. She liked to think of his arms clasping her. She liked him to touch her. She liked to remember that look of exalted passion in his eyes, and to know that it was glowing there for her.

The late afternoon brought news that the strike had been settled by a compromise. Within an hour

the New York special correspondents were on the way home. At Philadelphia the next morning Emily came into the restaurant car. "This way, Miss Bromfield," said the steward, with a low bow. She wondered how he knew her. She noticed that the answering smiles she got as she spoke to the newspaper men she had met at Furnaceville were broader than the occasion seemed to warrant. She glanced at herself in the mirror to see whether omission or commission in dressing was the cause. Then she took the seat Marlowe had reserved for her, opposite himself.

"There were three of us in the dressing-room making it as disagreeable for each other as possible after the usual feminine fashion," she began, and her glance fell upon the first page of the *Democrat* of the day before, which Marlowe was holding up. She gasped and stared. "Why!" she exclaimed, the red flaring up in her face, "where did they get it? It's disgraceful!"

"It" was a large reproduction of a pen and ink sketch of herself. Under "it" in big type was the line, "Emily Bromfield, the *Democrat's* Correspondent at the Strike." Beside "it" under a "scare-head" was the main story of the strike, and the last line of the heading read, "By Emily Bromfield." Then followed her account of what she had seen from the parlour window. What with astonishment, pleasure, and mortification over this sudden brazen blare of publicity for herself and her work, she was on the verge of a nervous outburst.

"Be careful," said Marlowe. "They're all looking at you. What I want to know is where did they get that sketch of you in a dreamy, thoughtful attitude at a desk covered with papers. It looks like an idyll of a woman journalist. All the out-of-town papers will be sure to copy that. But where did our people get it?"

Just then Camp came through on his way to the smoking car. "Who drew this, Camp?" asked Marlowe, stopping him.

Camp looked embarrassed and grinned. "I made it one day in the office," he said to Emily. "They must have fished it out of my desk in the art room."

Emily did not wish to hurt his feelings, so she concealed her irritation. Marlowe said: "A splendid piece of work! Lucky they knew about it and got it out."

"Thanks," said Camp, looking appealingly at Emily. "You're not offended?" he asked.

"It gave me a turn," Emily replied evasively. Camp took her smile for approval, thanked her and went on.

"You don't altogether like your fame?" said Marlowe with a teasing expression. "But you'll soon get used to it, and then you'll be cross if you look in the papers and don't find your name or a picture of yourself. That's the way 'newspaper notoriety' affects everybody. They first loathe, then endure, then pursue."

"Don't mock at me, please. It's good in a business way, isn't it? And I'm sure the picture

is not bad—in fact, it makes me look very—intellectual. And as they printed my despatch, that can't have been so horribly bad. Altogether I'm beginning to be reconciled and shall presently be delighted."

"You can get copies of the paper ready for mailing in the business office—a reduction on large quantities," said Marlowe. "And you won't need to unwrap them to mark where your friends must look."

Emily was glancing at her story with pretended indifference. "It makes more than I thought," she said carelessly, giving him the paper.

"Vanity! vanity! You know you are dying to read every word of it. I'll wager you'll go through it a dozen times once you are alone. We always do—at first."

"Well, why not? It's a harmless vanity and it ought to be called honest pride. And—I owe it to you—all to you. And I'm glad it is to *you* that I owe it."

At the office she was the centre of interest—for a few hours. "Isn't she a perfect picture?" said Miss Farwell to Miss Gresham, as they watched her receiving congratulations. "And she doesn't exaggerate herself. She probably knows that it was her looks and her dresses that got her the assignment and that make them think she's wonderful. She really didn't write it so very well. You could tell all the way through that it was a beginner, couldn't you?"

"Of course it wasn't a work of genius," admitted Miss Gresham. "But it was very good indeed."

"A story like that simply tells itself." Miss Farwell used envy's most judicial tone. "It couldn't be spoiled."

Miss Gresham and Emily went uptown together. "I've read my special several times," said Emily, "and I don't feel so set up over it as I did at first. I suspect they would have rewritten it if it had not got into the office late."

"You did wonderfully well," Miss Gresham assured her. "And you've put yourself in a position where your work will be noted and, if it's good, recognised. The hardest thing in the world is to get disentangled from the crowd so that those above are able to see one."

The routine of petty assignments into which she sank again was wearisome and distasteful. She had expected a better kind of work. Instead, she got the same work as before. As Coleman was giving her one of these trifles, he looked cautiously round to make sure that no one was within hearing distance, then said in a low voice: "Don't blame me for giving you poor assignments. I have orders from Mr. Stilson—strict orders."

Emily did not like Coleman's treachery to his superior, but her stronger feeling was anger against Stilson. "Why does he dislike me?" she thought. "What a mean creature he is. It must be some queer sort of jealous envy." She laughed at herself for this vanity. But she had more faith in it than

she thought, and it was with the latent idea of getting it a prop that she repeated to Miss Gresham what Coleman had said. "Why do you think Mr. Stilson told him that?" she asked.

"I don't know, I can't imagine," replied Miss Gresham. She reflected a moment and then turned her head so that Emily could not see her eyes. She thought she had guessed the reason. "Stilson is trying to save her from the consequences of her vanity," she said to herself, "I had better not tell her, as it would do no good and might make her dislike me." And, watching Emily more closely, she soon discovered that premature triumph had been a little too much for her good sense. Emily was entertaining an opinion of herself far higher than the facts warranted. "Stilson is doing her a service," Miss Gresham thought, as Emily complained from time to time of trifling assignments. "He'll restore her point of view presently."

After a month of this Stilson called her into his office. He stood at the window, tall and stern—he was taller than Marlowe and dark; and while Marlowe's expression was one of good-humoured, rather cynical carelessness, his was grave and haughty.

Without looking at her he began: "Miss Bromfield, we've been giving you a very important kind of work—the small items. They are the test of a newspaper's standard of perfection. I'm afraid you don't appreciate their importance."

"I'm doing the best I can," said Emily coldly.

He frowned, but she watched him narrowly, and

saw that he was suffering acute embarrassment. "It isn't easy for me to speak to you," he went on. "But—it's necessary. At first you did well. Now —you're *not* doing well."

There was a long, a painful silence. Then he suddenly looked at her. And in spite of herself, his expression melted resentment and obstinacy. "You can do well again," he said. "Please try."

The tone of the "Please try" made her feel his fairness and friendliness as she had not felt it before. "Thank you," she said impulsively. "I *will* try." She paused at the door and turned. "Thank you," she said again, earnestly. He was bending over his desk and seemed to be giving his attention to his papers. But Emily undersood him well enough now to know that he was trying to hide his embarrassment. When she was almost hidden from him by the closing door, she heard him begin to speak. "I beg your pardon," she said, showing her head round the edge of the door, "What did you say?"

"No matter," he replied, and she thought she saw, rather than heard, something very like a sigh.

CHAPTER XIII.

A COMPROMISE WITH CONVENTIONALITY.

MARLOWE was as responsible for Emily's self-exaggeration as was Emily herself. He had been enveloping her in an atmosphere of adulation, through which she could see clearly and sensibly neither him nor herself nor her affairs.

When she first appeared he was deeply entangled elsewhere. But at once with the adroitness of experience, he extricated himself and boldly advanced into the new and unprecedently attractive net which fate was spreading for him. He was of those men who do not go far on the journey without a woman, or long with the same woman. He abhorred monotony both in work and in love; a typical impressionist, he soon found one subject, whether for his mind or for his heart, exhausted and wearisome.

Emily in her loneliness and youth, yearning for love and companionship, was so frankly attracted that he at first thought her as easy a conquest as had been the women who dwelt in the many and brief chapters of the annals of his conquering career. But he, and she also, to her great surprise, discov-

ered that, while she had cast aside most conventionality in practice and all conventionality in theory, there remained an immovable remnant. And this, fast anchored in unreasoning inherited instinct, stubbornly resisted their joint attack. In former instances of somewhat similar discoveries, he had winged swiftly, and gracefully, away; now, to his astonishment, he found that his wings were snared. Without intention on his part, without effort on her part, he was fairly caught. Nor was he struggling against the toils.

They had been together many times since the return from Furnaceville. And usually it was just he and she, dining in the open air, or taking long drives or walks, or sailing the river or the bay. But their perplexed state of mind had kept them from all but subtle reference to the one subject of which both were thinking more and more intently and intensely. One night they were driving in a hansom after a dinner on the Savoy balcony—he suddenly bent and kissed the long sleeve of her thin summer dress at the wrist. "You light a flame that goes dancing through my veins," he said. "I wish I could find new words to put it in. But I've only the old ones, Emily—I love you and I want your love—I want you. This is an unconditional surrender and I'm begging you to receive it. You won't say no, will you, Emily?"

Her eyes were brilliant and her cheeks pale. But she succeeded in controlling her voice so that she could put a little mockery into her tone when she

said: "What—you! You, who are notoriously opposed to unconditional surrender. I never expected to live to see the day when you would praise treason and proclaim yourself a traitor."

"I love you," he said—"that's all the answer I can make."

"And only a few days ago some one was repeating to me a remark of yours—let me see, how did you put it? Oh, yes—'love is a bird that does not sing well in a cage."

"I said it—and I meant it," he replied. "And I love you—that's all. I still believe what I said, but—please, Emily, dear—bring the cage!"

The mockery in her face gave place to a serious look. "I wonder," she said, "does love sing at all in a cage? I've never known an instance, though I've read and heard of them. But they're almost all a long way off, or a long time ago, or among old-fashioned people."

"But I'm old-fashioned, I find—and won't you be, dear? And I think we might teach our wild bird to sing in a cage, don't you?"

Emily made no answer but continued to watch the dark trees, that closed in on either side of the shining drive.

"Since I've known you, Emily, I've found a new side to my nature—one I did not suspect the existence of. Perhaps it didn't exist until I knew you."

"It has been so with me," she said. She had been surprised and even disquieted by the upbursting of

springs of tenderness and gentleness and longing since she had known Marlowe.

"Do you care—a little, dear?" he asked.

She nodded. "But what were you going to say?"

"I've always disliked the idea of marriage," he went on. "There's something in me—not peculiar to me, I imagine, but in most men as well—that revolts at the idea of a bond of any kind A man falls in love with a woman or a woman with a man. And heretofore I've always said to myself, how can they know that love will last?"

"They can't know it," replied Emily. "And when they pledge themselves to keep on loving and honouring, they must know, if they are capable of thinking, that they've promised something they had no right to promise. I hate to be bound. I love to be free. Nothing, nothing, could induce me to give up my freedom."

Marlowe had expected that she would gladly put aside her idea of freedom the moment he announced that he was willing to sacrifice his own. Her earnestness disconcerted, alarmed him. "Emily!" he said in a low, intense tone, putting his hand upon hers. "Tell me"— She had turned her head and they were now looking each into the other's eyes—"do you—can't you—care for me?" He wondered at the appeal in his voice, at the anxiety with which he waited for her answer. "I cannot live without you, Emily."

"But if I were tied to you," she said, "if I felt compelled, if I felt that you were being compelled,

to keep on with me—well, I'm not sure that I could continue to care or to believe that you cared."

"Then"—he interrupted.

"But," she went on, "I'm not great enough or wise enough, or perhaps I was too long trained to conventionality, or am too recently and incompletely freed,—to——"

"It isn't necessary," he began, as she hesitated and cast about for a phrase. "Perhaps—in some circumstances—I'd have hoped that it would be so. But with you—it's different. I can't explain myself even to myself. All I know is that my theories have gone down the wind and that—I want you. I want you on the world's terms—for better or for worse, for ever and a day. Dear, can't you care enough for me to take the risk?"

He put his arm round her and kissed her. She said in a faint voice, hardly more than a murmur, "I think so—yes."

"Will you marry me, Emily?" he asked eagerly, and then he smiled with a little self-mockery. "I've always loathed that word 'marry'—and all other words that mean finality. I've always wished to be free to change my mind and my course at any moment. And now——"

She pushed him from her, but left her hand on his shoulder. "Yes, dear, but it isn't a finality with us. We go through a ceremony because—say, because it is convenient. But if we—either of us—cease to love, each must feel free to go. If

I ever found out that you had kissed me once, merely because you thought it was expected of you, I'd despise myself—and you. If I promise to marry you, dear, you must promise to leave me free."

"Since I could not hold you—the real you—an instant longer than you wished—I promise." He caught her in his arms and kissed her again and again. "But you'll never call on me to redeem my promise, will you, dear?"

"That's why I ask you to make it. If we're both free, we may not ever care to test it," she answered. The words came from her mind, but with them came a tone and a look from the heart that were an answer to his.

"We—you talk the new wisdom," he said, "but —" and he kissed her once more "feel the old wisdom, or folly—which is it? No matter—I love you."

"The road is very bright here and carriages are coming," she answered, sitting up and releasing herself from him. And then they both laughed at their sensitiveness to conventions.

Marlowe was all for flinging their theories overboard in the mass and accepting the routine as it is marked out for the married. But Emily refused. She could not entertain the idea of becoming a dependent upon him, absorbed in his personality. "I wish to continue to love him," she said to herself. "And also I'd be very foolish to bind him, though he wishes to be bound. The chances are, he'd grow

weary long before I did. A man's life is fuller than a woman's, even than a working woman's. And he has more temptations to wander."

"We will marry," she said to him, "but we will not 'settle down'."

"I should hope *not*," he answered, with energy, as before his eyes rose a vision of himself yawning in carpet-slippers with a perambulator in the front hall.

"We will compromise with conventionality" she went on. "We will marry, but we won't tell anybody. And I'll take an apartment with Joan Gresham and will go on with my work. And—Dearest, I don't wish to become an old story to you—at least not so long as we're young. I don't want you as my husband. I want you to be my lover. And I want to be always, every time we meet, new and interesting to you."

"But—why, I'd be little more than a stranger."

"Do you think so?" She put her arms about his neck and looked him full in the eyes. "You know it wouldn't be so."

He thought a moment. "I see what you mean," he said. "I suppose it is familiarity that drives love out of marriage. Whatever you wish, Strange Lady—anything, everything. We can easily try your plan."

"And if it fails, we can 'settle down' just like other people, where, if we 'settled down' first and failed at that, we'd have nothing left to try."

"You are so—so different from any other woman

that ever was," he said. "No wonder I love you in the way that a man loves only once."

"And I'm determined that you shall keep on loving me."

"I can see that you are getting ready to lead me a wild life." There was foreboding as well as jest in his tone.

CHAPTER XIV.

"EVERYTHING AWAITS MADAME."

FRANK wished to see Theresa well provided for—he was most amiable and generous where serving a friend cost him nothing and agreeably filled a few of his many vacant hours. He cast shrewdly about among the susceptible and eligible widowers and bachelors of his club and fixed upon Edgar Wayland's father. The old General and "cotton baron" was growing lonelier and lonelier. He was too rich to afford the luxury of friendship. He suspected and shunned sycophants. He dreaded being married for his money, yet longed for a home with some one therein who would make him comfortable, would listen patiently to his reminiscences and moralisings. He had led an anything but exemplary life, but having reached the age and condition where his kinds of self-indulgence are either highly dangerous or impossible, he wished to become a bulwark of the church and the social order.

"He needs me even more than I need him," said Theresa, when she disclosed her scheme to Emily, "and that's saying a good deal. He thinks I've been living in Blue Mountain, thinks I'm simple

and guileless—and I am, in comparison with him. I'll make a new and better man of him. If he got the sort of woman he thinks he wants, he'd be miserable. As it is, he'll be happy."

Theresa offered to introduce the General to Emily, but she refused, much to Theresa's relief. "It's just as well," she said, with the candour that was the chief charm of her character. "You're entirely too fascinating with your violet eyes and your wonderful complexion, my dear. But after he's safe, you must visit us."

When the time came for Theresa to go to Blue Mountain for her marriage, she begged Emily to go with her. "I didn't know how fond I was of you," she said, "until now that we're separating. And when I look at you, and forget for the moment what a sensible, self-reliant girl you are, it seems to me that you can't possibly get along without me to protect you."

But Emily could not go to the wedding. She was moving into an apartment in Irving Place which she and Joan had taken. Also she was marrying.

The wedding was set for a Thursday, but Marlowe found that he must leave town on Wednesday night to go with the President on a short "swing round the circle." So on Wednesday afternoon he and Emily went to a notary in One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street and were married by certificate.

"Certainly the modern improvements do go far toward making marriage painless," said Marlowe as they left with the certificates. "I haven't felt it at

all. Have you?" And he stopped at a letter box to mail the duplicate for the Board of Health. As he balanced it on the movable shelf, he looked at her with a queer expression in his eyes. "You can still draw back," he said. "If we tear up the papers, we're not married. If I mail this one we are."

She made a movement toward the balancing letter and he hastily let it drop into the box. "Too late," he said, in a mock tragic tone. "We are married—tied—bound!"

"And now let us forget it," was Emily's reply. "No one knows it except us; and we need never think of it."

They were silent on the journey down town, and her slight depression seemed to infect him deeply. Two hours after the ceremony he was dining alone in the Washington express, and she and Joan were having their first dinner in their first "home."

Two weeks later—in the last week of September—she took the four o'clock boat for Atlantic Highlands and the train there for Seabright. At the edge of the platform of the deserted station she found the yellow trap with stripes of red on the body and shafts—the trap he had described in his letter.

"For Germain's?" she asked the driver, after she had looked round carefully, as if she were not going to meet her husband.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered. "They're expecting you."

Her trunk and bag were put on the seat with the

driver and they were soon in the Rumson road, gorgeous with autumn finery. There were the odours of the sea and the woods, and the air was tranquil yet exhilarating. The trim waggon, the brilliant trees arching overhead, the attractive houses and lawns on either side—it seemed to her that she was in a dream. They turned down a lane to the right. It led through a thick grove of maples, its foliage a tremulous curtain of scarlet and brown lit by the declining sun. Another turn and they were at the side entrance to an old-fashioned brick house with creepers screening verandas and balconies. There were tables on the verandas, and tables out in the garden under the trees. She could hear only the birds and the faint sigh of the distant surf.

Rapid footsteps, and a small, fat, smooth man appeared and bowed profoundly. "Monsieur has not arrived yet," he said. "Madame Marlowe, is it not?"

She blushed and answered nervously, "Yes—that is—yes." It was the first time she had heard her legal name, or even had definitely recognised its existence.

"Monsieur telegraphed for madame"—He had a way of saying madame which suggested that it was a politeness rather than an actuality—"to order dinner, and that he will presently come to arrive by the Little Silver station from which he will drive. He missed his train unhappily. But madame need not derange herself. Monsieur comes to arrive now."

Emily seated herself on the veranda at its farthest table from the entrance. "How guilty and queer and—happy I feel," she thought.

Monsieur Germain brought the dinner card. "I'm sure we can trust to you for the dinner," she said.

"Bien, madame. It will be a pleasure. And will madame have a refreshing drink while she passes the time?"

"Yes—a little--perhaps—a little brandy?" she said tentatively.

"Excellent." And Germain himself brought a "pony" of brandy, a tall empty glass and a bottle of soda. He opened the soda and went away. She drank the brandy from the little glass, and then some of the soda. Almost instantly she felt her timidity flying before a warm courage that spread through her veins and sparkled in her eyes. "It is even more beautiful here than I imagined it would be," she thought, as she looked round. "And I'm glad I got here first and had a chance to get—the brandy."

When her husband came he found her leaning against a pillar of the veranda looking out into space, an attitude that was characteristic of her. She greeted him with a blush, with downcast eyes, with mischievous radiance.

"I just saw my first star," she said, "and I made a wish."

He put his arm round her and his head against hers. "Don't tell me what you wished," he said,

"for—I—we—want it to come true. It *must* come true. And it will, won't it?"

"I'm very, very happy—thus far," she answered.

They stood in silence, watching Germain and the waiter set a table under the trees—the linen, the silver and glass and china, the candlesticks. And then Germain came to the walk below them and beamed up at them.

"Everything awaits madame," he said.

CHAPTER XV.

A FLICKERING FIRE.

THEY made several journeys to Monsieur Germain that fall, as he did not close his inn and return to Philadelphia until the second week in December. He had the instinctive French passion for the romantically unconventional; and, while he was a severely proper person in his own domestic relations, the mystery of the quiet visits of this handsome young couple delighted him. He made them very comfortable indeed, and his big smooth face shone like a sun upon their happiness.

As Marlowe had always been most irregular in his appearances at the office, Emily's absences did not connect her with him in the minds of their acquaintances. Even Joan suspected nothing. She saw that Marlowe was devoted to her beautiful friend and she believed that Emily loved him, but she had seen love go too often to be much affected by its coming.

After three months of this prolonged and peculiar honeymoon, Marlowe showed the first faint signs of impatience. It was a new part to him, this of being the eluded instead of the eluder, the un-

certain, not the creator of uncertainty. And it was a part that baffled his love and irritated his vanity. He thought much upon ways and means of converting his Spartan marriage into one in which his authority, his headship would be recognized, and at last hit upon a plan of action which he ventured to hope might bring her to terms. He stayed away from her for two weeks, then went to Chicago for a month, writing her only an occasional brief note.

Before he left for Chicago, Emily was exceeding sick at heart. She kept up appearances at the office, but at home went about with a long and sad face. "They've quarrelled," thought Joan, "and she's taking it hard." Emily was tempted to do many foolish things—for example, she wrote a dozen notes at least, each more or less ingeniously disguising its real purpose. But she sent none of them. "If he doesn't care," she reflected, "it would be humiliating myself to no purpose. And if he does care, he has a good reason which he'll tell when he can."

Then came his almost curt note announcing his departure for Chicago. She was angry—"he's treating his wife as he wouldn't treat a girl he'd been merely attentive to." But, worse than angry, she was wounded, in the mortal spot in her love for him—her unquestioning confidence in him.

This might be called her introduction to the real Marlowe, the beginning of her acquaintance with the man she had married after a look at the outside of him and a distorted glimpse of such parts of

the inside man as are shown by one bent upon making the most favourable impression.

When he had been in Chicago three weeks, came a long letter from him—"Forgive me. I was not content as we were living. I want you—all of you, all of the time. I want you as my very own. And I thought to win you to my way of thinking. But you seem to be stronger than I." And so on through many pages, filled with passionate outpourings—extravagant compliments, alternations of pride and humility, all the eloquence of a lover with an emotional nature and a gift for writing. It was to her an irresistible appeal, so intensely did she long for him. But there drifted through her mind, to find lodgment in an obscure corner, the thought: "Why is he dissatisfied with a happiness that satisfies me? Why do I feel none of this desire to abandon my independence and submerge myself?" At the moment her answer was, that if she were to do as he wished he would remain free, while she would become his dependent. Afterward that answer did not satisfy her.

He came back, and their life went on as before until——

She overheard two men at the office talking of an adventure he had had while he was in Chicago. She did not hear all, and she got no details, but there was enough to let her see that he had not lived up to their compact. "Now I understand his letter," she said. "It was the result of remorse." And with a confused mingling of jeal-

ousy and indignation, she reviewed his actions toward her immediately after his return. She now saw that they were planned deliberately to make it impossible for her to think him capable of such a lapse. She could follow the processes of his mind as it worked out the scheme, gauging her credulity and his own adroitness. When she had done, she had found him guilty of actions that concerned their most sacred relations, and that were tainted with the basest essence of hypocrisy.

"I shouldn't care what he had done," she said to herself bitterly, "if he had been honest with me —honestly silent or honestly outspoken. I cannot, shall not, ever trust him again. And such needless deception! He acted as if I were the ordinary silly woman who won't make allowances and can't generously forgive. I love him, but——"

"I love him, but—" that is always the beginning of a change which at least points in the direction of the end. At first she was for having it out with him. But she decided that he would only think her vulgarly jealous; and so, with unconscious inconsistency, she resolved to violate her own fundamental principle of absolute frankness.

A few weeks and these wounds to her love, inflicted by him and aggravated by herself, seemed to have healed. They were again together almost every day and were apparently like lovers in the first ecstasy of engagement. But while he was completely under her spell, her attitude toward him was slightly critical. She admired his looks,

his physical strength, his brilliant quickness of mind, as much as ever. At the same time she began to see and to measure his weaknesses.

She was often, in the very course of laughter or admiration at his cleverness, brought to a sudden halt by the discovery that he was not telling the truth. Like many men of rapid and epigrammatic speech, he would sacrifice anything, from a fact of history to the reputation of a friend, for the sake of scoring a momentary triumph. And whenever she caught him in one of these carelessly uttered falsehoods she was reminded of his falsehood to her—that rankling, cankerous double falsehood of unfaithfulness and deceit.

Another hastener of the mortal process of de-idealisation was the discovery that his sparkle was hiding a shallowness which was so lacking in depth that it offended even her, a woman—and women are not easily offended by pretence in men. His mind was indeed quick, but quick only to see and seize upon that which had been discovered and shown to him by some one else. And so forgetful or so used to borrowing without any sort of credit was he, that he would even exhibit to Emily as original with himself the ideas which she had expressed to him only a few days before. He had a genius for putting everything in the show-window; but he could not conceal from her penetrating, and now critical and suspicious eyes, the empty-shelved shop behind, with him, full of vanity and eagerness to attract any wayfarer, and peering out to note what

effect he was producing. She discovered that one of the main sources of his education was Stilson—that it was to an amazing, a ridiculous, a pitiful extent Stilson's views and ideas and knowledge and sardonic wit which he bore away and diluted and served up as his own. Comparison is the life and also the death of love. As soon as she began to compare him with Stilson and to admit that he was the lesser, she began to neglect love, to leave it to the alternating excessive heat and cold of passion.

But all these causes of a curious decline were subordinate to one great cause—she discovered that he was a coward, that he was afraid of her. The quality which she admired in a man above every other was courage. She had thought Marlowe had it. And he was physically brave; but, when she knew him well and had got used to that cheapest form of courage which dazzles the mob and deceives the unthinking, she saw a coward lurking beneath. He wrote things he did not believe; he shirked issues both in his profession and in his private life; he lied habitually, not because people intruded upon his affairs and so compelled and excused misrepresentation, but because he was afraid to face the consequences of truth.

In February she was saying sadly to herself: "If he'd been brave, he would have made me come to him, could have made me do as he wished. Instead——" She was not proud, yet neither was she ashamed, of the conspicuous tyranny she had established over him.

"It seems to me," she said to Joan at breakfast one morning, to draw her out, "that the only way to be married, is for each to live his own life. Then at least there can be none of that degrading familiarity and monotony."

Joan shook her head in vigorous dissent.

"Why not?" asked Emily.

"Because it is certain to end in failure—absolutely certain."

Emily looked uncomfortable. "I don't see why," she said, somewhat irritably. "Don't you think people can get too much of each other?"

"Certainly—and in marriage they always do; but if it's to be a marriage, if there's to be anything permanent about it, they must live together, see each other constantly, become completely united in the same current of life; all their interests must be in common, and they must have a common destiny and must never forget it."

"But that isn't love," objected Emily.

"No, it isn't love—love of the kind we're all crazy about nowadays. But it is married love—and that's the kind we're talking about. If I were married I shouldn't let my husband out of my sight for a minute, except when it was necessary. I'd see to it that we became one. If he were the stronger, he'd be the one. If I were the stronger, I'd be the one—but I'd try to be generous."

Emily laughed at this picture of tyranny, so directly opposed to her own ideas and to her own tyranny over her husband. She mocked Joan for

entertaining such "barbaric notions." But later in the day, she caught herself saying, with a sigh she'd have liked to believe was not regret, "It's too late now."

There were days when she liked him, hours when she wrought herself into an exaltation which was a feeble but deceptive imitation of his adoration of her—and how he did adore her then, how he did strain to clasp her more tightly, believing her still his, and not heeding instinctive, subtle warnings that she was slipping from him. But in contrast to these days of liking and hours of loving were her longer periods of indifference and, occasionally, of weariness.

Early in the summer, there was a revival of her interest—a six weeks' separation from him; an attack of the "blues," of loneliness; a sudden appreciation of the strength and comfort of the habit which a husband had become with her.

On a Friday evening in June he was coming to dine, and Miss Gresham was dining out. He arrived twenty minutes late. "I've been making my arrangements to sail to-morrow," he explained. "You can come on the Wednesday or Saturday steamer—if you can arrange to leave on such short notice."

She looked surprised—she was no longer astonished at the newspaper world's rapid shifts.

"They're sending me to reorganise the foreign service. They also wish to send a woman to Paris, and didn't know whom to ask. I suggested you,

and reminded them that you speak French. They soon consented. My headquarters will be London, but I'll be free to go where I wish. Will you come? Won't you come?"

Evidently he was assuming that she would; but she said, "I'll have to think it over."

He looked at her nervously. "Why, I may be away several years," he said. "And over there——"

"You forget—I'm tied up with Joan. We have a lease. But that might be arranged. Do you know what salary they'll give me?"

"Sixty a week—and your travelling expenses."

"Yes," said Emily, after a moment's silent casting up of figures. "Yes—the lease can be taken care of. Then, there is my work—what are the advantages?"

"Experience—a change of scene—a chance to do more individual work—and last, and, of course, least in your eyes, lady-with-a-career-to-make, the inestimable advantages of——"

The servant was out of the room. He went behind her chair, and bent over and kissed her. "We shall be happy as never before, dear—happy though we have been, haven't we? Think what we can do together—how free we shall be, how many beautiful places we can visit."

She was looking at him tenderly and dreamily when he was sitting opposite her again. "Yes, we shall be happy," she said, and to herself she added, "again."

The next morning, at about the hour when Marlowe's boat was dropping down the bay, Joan went into Emily's room and awakened her. "I can't wait any longer," she said. "Did you know you were going abroad?"

"Yes," said Emily, sleepily rubbing her eyes, "Marlowe was dining here last night, and he told me."

"It's very evident that Stilson likes and appreciates you," continued Joan. "He selected you."

Emily smiled faintly—she was remembering what Marlowe had said.

"I happened to be in Stilson's office," continued Joan, "when he was deciding. It seems the London man suddenly resigned and something had to be done at once. You know Stilson is acting Managing Editor. He asked me if you spoke French. He said: 'I'm just sending for Marlowe to come down, as I wish him to go to London for us; and if Miss Bromfield can speak French, I'll send her to Paris.' I told him that you spoke it almost like a native. 'That settles it,' he said, 'I'll tell her tomorrow—but I don't mind if you tell her first. You live together, don't you?' And you were asleep when I came last night, and I'm *so* disappointed that I'm not the first to tell you."

Emily had sunk back into her pillow and was concealing her face from Joan. "I wish they'd sent you," she said presently, in a strained voice.

"Oh, I couldn't have gone. The fact is I've

written a play and had it accepted. It's to be produced at the Lyceum in six weeks."

"But why didn't you tell me?" Emily could not uncover her face, could not put interest in her tone—she could think only of Marlowe, of his petty, futile, vainglorious lie to her. A few hours before—it seemed but a few minutes—they had been so happy together. She had fancied that the best was come again. Her nerves were still vibrating to his caresses. And now—this adder-like reminder of all his lies, deceptions, hypocrisies.

"I thought I'd surprise you," replied Joan. "Besides, it's not a very good play. And when you're in Paris, you might watch the papers for the notices of the first night of 'Love the Liar, by Harriette Stone'—that will be my play and I."

"Love the Liar," Emily repeated, and then Joan saw her shoulders shaking.

"Laughing at me? I don't wonder; it's very sentimental—but then, you know, I have a streak of sentiment in me."

When Joan left her, Emily brushed the tears from her eyes and slowly rose. "I ought to be used to him by this time," she said. "But—oh, why did he spoil it! Why does he *always* spoil it!"

At the office, she was apparently bright again, certainly was looking very lovely and a little mischievous as she went in to see Stilson. "I'd thank you, if I dared," she said, "but I know that you'd cut me short with some remark about my thanks being an insinuation that you were cheating the pro-

prietors of the *Democrat* by showing favouritism." She was no longer in the least afraid of him. "Perhaps you'd like it better if I told you I was angry about it."

"And why angry, pray?" There was a twinkle deep down in his sombre sardonic eyes.

"Because you're sending me away to get rid of me."

He winced and flushed a deep red. He rose abruptly and bowed. "No thanks are necessary," he said, and he was standing at the window with his back to her.

"I beg your pardon," she said to his strong, uncompromising shoulders. "I did not mean to offend you—you must know that."

"*Offend* me?" He turned his face toward her but did not let her see his eyes. He put out his hand and just touched hers before drawing it away. "My manner is unfortunate. But—that is not important. Success to you, if I don't see you before you sail."

As she left his office she could see his face, his eyes, in profile. His expression was more than sad —it was devoid of hope.

"Where have I seen an expression like that before?" she wondered. But she could not then remember.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMBERS.

ON the way across the Atlantic her painful thoughts faded; and, after the mid-ocean period when the worlds on either side of those infinite waters dwindle into unreality, she found her imagination looking forward to her new world as a place where there would be a new beginning in her work and in her love. At Cherbourg Marlowe came out on the lighter. "How handsome he is," she was saying to herself, as she leaned against the rail, watching his eyes search for her. "And how well he wears his clothes. His head is set upon his shoulders just right—what a strong, graceful figure he has." And she again felt something resembling her initial interest and pride in him, her mind once more, as at first, interpreting his character through his appearance, instead of reading into his appearance the man as she knew him.

When their eyes met she welcomed and returned the thought he sent her in his look.

They were soon together, bubbling over with the joy of living like two children let out into the sunshine to play after a long imprisonment with lessons. They had a compartment to themselves down

to Paris and sat very near each to the other, with illustrated papers as the excuse for prolonging the enormous pleasure of the physical sensation of nearness. They repeated again and again the commonplaces which all human beings use as public coaches to carry their inarticulate selves a visiting each other.

She went to sleep for a few minutes, leaning against him; and a breeze teased his nerves into an ecstasy of happiness with a stray of her fine red-brown hair. "I've never been so happy," she thought as she awakened, "I could never be happier." She did not move until it became impossible for her to refrain from some outward expression of her emotions. Then she only looked up at him. And his answer showed that his mood was hers. As they sank back in the little victoria outside the station, she gave a long look round the busy, fascinating scene — strange, infectious of gaiety and good-humour. "Paris!" she said, with a sigh of content in her dream realised.

"Paris—and Emily," he replied.

They went to a small hotel in the Avenue Montaigne—"Modern enough," he said, "but very French and not yet discovered by foreigners." At sunset they drove to d'Armenonville to dine under the trees and to watch the most interesting groups in the world—those groups of the civilised through and through, in dress, in manners, in thought. After two days he was called back to London. When he returned at the end of two weeks she had

transformed herself. A new gown, a new hat, a new way of wearing her hair, an adaptation of her graces of form and manner to the fashion of the moment, and she seemed a Parisienne.

"You *have* had your eyes open," he said, as he noted one detail after another, finally reaching the face which bloomed so delicately beneath the sweeping brim of her hat. "And what a gorgeous hat! And put on at the miraculous angle—how few women know how to put on a hat." Of his many tricks in the art at which he excelled—the art of superficially pleasing women—none was more effective than his intelligent appreciation of their dress.

They staid at her pretty little apartment in a maison meublèe in the Rue des Capucines; in a few days they went down into Switzerland, and then, after a short pause at Paris, to Trouville. In all they were together about a month, he neglecting his work in spite of her remonstrances and her example. For she did her work conscientiously—and she had never written so well. He tried to stay on with her at Paris, but she insisted on his going.

"I believe you wish to be rid of me," he said, irritation close beneath the surface of his jesting manner.

"This morning's is the third complaining cable you've had from the office," she answered.

He looked at her, suspecting an evasion, but he went back to London. The unpleasant truth was that he had worn out his welcome. She had never

before been with him continuously for so much as a week. Now, in the crowded and consecutive impressions of these thirty uninterrupted days, all the qualities which repelled her stood out, stripped of the shimmer and glamour of novelty. And as she was having more and more difficulty in deceiving herself and in spreading out the decreasing area of her liking for him over the increasing gap where her love for him had been, he, in the ironical perversity of the law of contraries, became more and more demonstrative and even importunate. Many times in her effort to escape him and the now ever-impending danger of open rupture, she was driven to devices which ought not to have deceived him, perhaps did not really deceive him.

When he was gone she sat herself down to a "good cry"—an expression of overwrought nerves rather than of grief.

But after a few weeks she began to be lonely. The men she met were of two kinds—those she did not like, all of whom were willing to be friends with her on her terms; those she did like more or less, none of whom was willing to be with her on any but his own terms. And so she found herself often spending the most attractive part of the day—the evening—dismally shut up at home, alone or with some not very interesting girl. She had never been so free, yet never had she felt so bound. With joy all about her, with joy beckoning her from the crowded, fascinating boulevards, she was a prisoner. She needed Marlowe, and she sent for him.

She was puzzled by the change in him. She had only too good reason to know that he loved her as insistently as ever, but there was a strain in his manner and speech, as if he were concealing something from her. She caught him looking at her in a peculiar way—as if he were angry or resentful or possibly were suspecting her changed and changing feelings toward him. And he had never been less interesting—she had never before heard him talk stupidities and lifeless commonplaces or break long silences with obvious attempts to rouse himself to "make conversation."

She was not sorry when he went—he stayed four days longer than he had intended; but she was also glad to get a message from him ten days later, announcing a week-end visit. The telegram reached her at *dejeuner* and afterward, in a better mood, she drove to the Continental Hotel, where she sometimes heard news worth sending. She sat at a long window in the empty drawing-rooms and watched a light and lazy snow drift down.

As it slowly chilled her to a sense of loneliness, of disappointment in the past, of dread of the future, she became conscious that a man was pointedly studying her. She looked at him with the calm, close, yet repelling, stare which experience gives a woman as a secure outlook upon the world of strange men. This strange man was not ungracefully sprawled in a deep chair, his top hat in a lap made by the loose crossing of his extremely long and extremely strong legs. His feet and hands were proportionate to

his magnitude. His hands were white and the fingers in some way suggested to her a public speaker. He had big shoulders and a great deal of coat—a vast overcoat over a frock coat, all made in the loosest English fashion. She had now reached his head —a large head with an aggressive forehead and chin, the hair dark brown, thin on top and at the temples, the skin pallid but healthy. His eyes were bold and keen, and honest. He looked a tremendous man, and when he rose and advanced toward her she wondered how such bulk could be managed with so much grace. "An idealist," she thought, "of the kind that has the energy to be very useful or very dangerous."

"You are alone, mademoiselle," he said, in French that was fluent but American, "and I am alone. Let us have an adventure."

Emily's glance started up his form with the proper expression of icy oblivion. But by the time it reached the lofty place from which his eyes were looking down at her it was hardly more than an expression of bewilderment. To give him an icy stare would have seemed as futile as for the valley to try to look scorn upon the peak. Before Emily could drop her glance, she had seen in his eyes an irresistible winning smile, as confiding as a boy's, respectful, a little nervous, delightfully human and friendly.

"I can see what you are," he continued in French, "and it may be that you see that I am not untrustworthy. I am lonely and shall be more so

if you fail me. It seemed to me that—pardon me, if I intrude—you looked lonely also — and sad. Why should we be held from helping each the other by a convention that sensible people laugh at even when they must obey it?"

His voice pleaded his cause as words could not; and there was a certain compulsion in it also. Emily felt that she wished to yield, that it would be at once unkind and absurd not to yield, and that she must yield. The impression of mastering strength was new and, to her surprise, agreeable.

"Why not?" she said slowly in French, regarding him with unmistakable straightforwardness and simplicity. "I am depressed. I am alone. I have been looking inside too much. Let us see. What do you propose?"

"We might go to the Louvre. It is near, and perhaps we can think of something while we are there."

They walked to the Louvre, he talking appreciatively of France and the French people. He showed that he thought her a Frenchwoman and she did not undeceive him. She could not decide what his occupation was, but felt that he must be successful, probably famous, in it. "He is not so tall after all," she said to herself, "not much above six feet. And he must be about forty-five."

As they went through the long rooms, she found that he knew the paintings and statuary. "You paint?" she asked.

"No," he replied with an impatient shrug. "I only talk—talk, talk, talk, until I am sick of myself. Again, I am compelled to listen—listen to the outpourings of vanity and self-excuse and self-complacence until I loathe my kind. It seems to me that it is only in France that one finds any great number of people with a true sense of proportion."

"But France is the oldest, you know. It inherited from Greece and Rome when the rest of Europe was a wilderness."

"And we inherited a little from France," he said. "But, unfortunately, more from England. I think the strongest desire I have is to see my country shake off the English influence—the self-righteousness, the snobbishness. In England if a man of brains compels recognition, they hasten to give him a title. Their sense of consistency in snobbishness must not be violated. They put snobbishness into their church service and create a snob-god who calls some Englishmen to be lords, and others to be servants."

"But there is nothing like that in America?"

"Not officially, and perhaps not among the mass of the people. But in New York, in one class with which my—my business compels me to have much to do, the craze for imitating England is rampant. It is absurd, how they try to erect snobbishness into a virtue."

Emily shrugged her shoulders. "What does it matter?" she said. "Caste is never made by the

man who looks down, but always by the man who looks up."

"But it is evil. It is a sin against God. It——"

"I do not wish to dispute with you," interrupted Emily. "But let us not disturb God in his heaven. We are talking of earth."

"You do not believe in God?" He looked at her in astonishment.

"Do you?"

"I—I think I do. I assume God. Without Him, life would be—monstrous."

"Yet the most of the human race lives without Him. And of those who profess to believe in Him, no two have the same idea of Him. Your God is a democrat. The Englishman's God is an autocrat and a snob."

"And your God?"

Emily's face grew sad. "Mine? The God that I see behind all the mischance and stupidity and misery of this world—is—" She shook her head. "I don't know" she ended vaguely.

"It seems strange that a woman so womanly—looking as you do, should feel and talk thus."

"My mode of life has made me see much, has compelled me to do my own thinking. Besides, I am a child of this generation. We suspect everything that has come down to us from the ignorant past. Even so ardent a believer as you, when asked, 'Do you believe?' stammers, 'I *think* I do.'"

"I am used to one-sided arguments," said the stranger with a laugh. "Usually, I lay down the law and others listen in silence."

Emily looked at him curiously. Could he be a minister? No, it was impossible, He was too masculine, too powerful.

"Oh, I was not arguing," she answered lightly. "I was only trying to suggest that you might be more charitable."

"I confess," he said, "that I am always talking to convince myself. I do not know what is right or what is wrong, but I wish to know. I doubt, but I wish to believe. I despair, but I wish to hope."

She had no answer and they were silent for a few minutes. Then he began:

"I have an impulse to tell you what I would not tell my oldest and dearest friend—perhaps be cause we are two utter strangers whose paths have crossed in their wanderings through infinity and will never cross again. Do you mind if I speak of myself?"

"No." Emily intensely wished to hear. "But I warn you that our paths *may* cross again."

"That does not matter. I am obeying an instinct. It is always well to obey instincts. I think now that the instinct which made me speak to you in the first place was this instinct to tell you. But it is not a tragic story or even exciting. I am rather well known in the community where I live. I am what we call in America a self-made man. I come from the people—not from ignorance and crime and sensuality, but from the real people—who think, who aspire, who advance, who work and take

pleasure and pride in their work, the people who have built our republic which will perish if they decline."

He hesitated, then went on with increasing energy: "I am a clergyman. I went into the ministry because I ardently believed in it, saw in it an opportunity to be a leader of men in the paths which I hoped it would help me to follow. I have been a clergyman for twenty-five years. And I have ceased to believe that which I teach. Louder than I can shout to my congregation, louder than my conscience can shout to me, a voice continually gives me the lie." He threw out his arm with a gesture that suggested a torrent flinging aside a dam. "I preach the goodness of God, and I never make a tour among the poor of my parish that I do not doubt it. I preach the immortality of the soul, and I never look out upon a congregation and remember what an infinite multitude of those same commonplace, imperfect types there have been, that I do not think: 'It is ridiculous to say that man, the weak, the insignificant, the deformity, is an immortal being, each individual worth preserving through eternity.' I preach the conventional code of morals, and——"

"You ought not to tell me these things," said Emily, as he paused. She felt guilty because she was permitting him to think her a Frenchwoman, when she was of his own country and city.

"Well—I have said enough. And how much good it has done me to confess! You could not

possibly have a baser opinion of me than I deserve. Telling such things is nothing in comparison with living them. I have lied and lied and lied so long that the joy of telling the truth intoxicates me. I am like a man crawling up out of years in a slimy dungeon to the light. Do you suppose it would disturb his enjoyment to note that spectators were commenting upon his unlovely appearance?"

"After all, what you tell me is the commonplace of life. Who doesn't live lies, cheating himself and others?"

"But I do not wish the commonplace, the false, the vulgar. There is something in me that calls for higher things. I demand a *good* God. I demand an *immortal* soul. I demand a *right* that is clear and absolute. And I long for real love—ennobling, inspiring. Why have I all these instincts when I am compelled to live the petty, swindling, cringing life of a brute dominated by the passion for self-preservation?"

Emily thought a moment, then with a twinkle of mockery in her eyes, yet with seriousness too, quoted: "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

He smiled as the waters of his own fountain thus unexpectedly struck him in the face. "But my legs are weary, and my knuckles sore," he replied. "Still—what is there to do but to persist? One must persist."

"Work and hope," said Emily, musingly. And she remembered Marlowe's "work and love"; love

had gone, but hope—she felt a sudden fresh upspringing of it in her heart.

When they set out from the hotel she had been in a reckless mood of despondency. She had lost interest in her work, she had lost faith in her future —was not the heart-interest the central interest of life, and what had become of her heart-interest? This stranger to whose power she had impulsively yielded in the first instance, had a magical effect upon her. His pessimism was not disturbing, for beneath it lay a tremendous belief in men and in destiny. It was his energy, his outgiving of a compelling masculine force, that aroused her to courage again. She looked at him gratefully and at once began to compare him with Marlowe. "What a child this man makes him seem," she thought. "This is the sort of man who would inspire one. And what inspiration to do or to be am I getting from my husband?"

"You are disgusted with me." The stranger was studying her face.

"No—I was thinking of some one else," she replied—"of my own troubles." And then she flushed guiltily, as if she had let him into her confidence—"a traitor's speech" she thought. Aloud she said: "I must go. I thank you for the good you have done me. I can't tell you how or why, but—" She ended abruptly and presently added, "I mustn't say that I hope we shall meet again. You see, I have your awful secret."

He laughed—there was boyishness in his laugh,

but it was not boisterous. "You terrify me," he exclaimed. Then, reflectively, "I have an instinct that we shall meet again."

"Perhaps. Why not? It would be far stranger if we did not than if we did?"

He went with her to a cab and, with polite consideration, left her before she could give her address to the cabman. "I wish he had asked to see me again," she thought, looking after his tower-like figure as he strode away. "But I suspect it was best not. There are some men whom it is not wise to see too much of, when one is in a certain mood. And I must do my duty." She made a wry face—an exaggeration, but the instinct to make it was genuine.

CHAPTER XVII.

ASHES.

EMILY'S "adventure" lingered with increasing vagueness for a few days, then vanished under a sudden pressure of work. When she was once more at leisure Marlowe came, and she was surprised by the vividness and persistence with which her stranger returned. She struggled in vain against the comparisons that were forced upon her. Marlowe seemed to her a clever "understudy"—"a natural, born, incurable understudy," she thought, "and now that I'm experienced enough to be able to discriminate, how can I help seeing it?" She was weary of the tricks and the looks of a man whom she now regarded as a trafficker in stolen bits of other men's individualities—and his tricks and his looks were all there was left of him for her.

"Some people—two I want you to meet, came with me—that is, at the same time," he said. "Let's dine with them at Larue's to-morrow night."

"Why not to-night? I've an engagement to-morrow night. You did not warn me that you were coming."

Marlowe looked depressed. "Very well," he said, "I can arrange it, I think."

"Are they Americans—these friends of yours?"

There was a strain in his voice as he answered, which did not escape Emily's supersensitive ears. "No—English," he said. "Lord Kilboggan and Miss Fenton—the actress. You may have heard of her. She has been making a hit in the play everyone over there is talking about and running to see—'The Morals of the Marchioness.'"

"Oh, yes—the play with the title *rôle* left out."

"It *is* pretty 'thick'—and Miss Fenton was the marchioness. But she's not a bit like that in private life. Even Kilboggan gives her a certificate of good character."

"*Even* Kilboggan?"

"He's such a scoundrel. He blackguards everyone. But he'll amuse you. He's witty and good-looking and one of those fascinating financial mysteries. He has no known source of income, yet he's always idle, always well dressed, and always in funds. He would have been a famous adventurer if he'd lived a hundred years ago."

"But as he lives in this practical age, he comes dangerously near to being a plain 'dead beat'—is that it?" Emily said this carelessly enough, but something in her manner made Marlowe wince.

"Oh, wait until you see him. We can't carry our American ideas among these English. They look upon work as a greater disgrace than having a mysterious income. Kilboggan is liked by everyone, except women with daughters to marry off and husbands whose vanity is tempered by misgivings."

"And what is your friend doing in Miss Fentons' train?"

"Well—at first I didn't know what to make of it. But afterward I saw that I was probably mistaken. I suppose she tolerates him because he's an earl. It's in the blood."

"And why do *you* tolerate him?" Emily's tone was teasing, but it made Marlowe wince again.

"I don't. I went with Denby—the theatrical man over in New York—several times to see Miss Fenton. He has engaged her for next season. And Kilboggan was there or joined us at dinner or supper. They were coming over to Paris at the same time. I thought it might amuse you to meet them."

Marlowe's look and speech were frank, yet instinctively Emily paused curiously upon his eager certificate of good character to Miss Fenton in face of circumstances which a man of his experience would regard as conclusive. Also she was puzzled by the elaborateness of his explanation. She wished to see Miss Fenton.

They met that evening at Larue's and dined downstairs. Emily instantly noted that Marlowe's description of Kilboggan was accurate. "How can any one be fooled by these frauds?" she thought. "He carries his character in his face, as they all do. I suppose the reason they get on is because the first impression wears away." Then she passed to her real interest in the party—Miss Fenton. Her first thought was—"How beautiful!" Her second thought—"How shallow and stupid!"

Victoria Fenton was tall and thin—obtrusively thin. Her arms and legs were long, and they and her narrow hips and the great distance from her chin to the swell of her bosom combined to give her an appearance of snake-like grace—uncanny, sensuous, morbidly fascinating. Her features were perfectly regular, her skin like an Amsterdam baby's, her eyes deep brown, and her hair heavy ropes of gold. Her eyes seemed to be brilliant; but when Emily looked again, she saw that they were dull, and that it was the colouring of her cheeks which made them seem bright. In the mindless expression of her eyes, in her coarse, wide mouth and long white teeth, Emily found the real woman. And she understood why Miss Fenton could say little, and eat and drink greedily, and still could shine.

But, before Miss Fenton began to exhibit her appetite, Emily had made another discovery. As she and Marlowe entered Larue's, Victoria gave him a look of greeting which a less sagacious woman than she would not have misunderstood. It was unmistakably the look of potential proprietorship.

Emily glanced swiftly but stealthily at Marlowe by way of the mirror behind the table. He was wearing the expression of patient and bored indifference which had become habitual with him since he had been associating with Englishmen. Their eyes met in the mirror—"He is trying to see how I took that woman's look at him," she thought, contemptuously. "But he must have known in advance that she would betray herself and him.

He must have brought me here deliberately to see it or brought her here to see me—or both." A little further reflection, and suspicion became certainty, and her eyelids hid a look of scorn.

She made herself agreeable to Kilboggan, who proved to be amusing. As soon as the food and drink came, Victoria neglected Marlowe. He, after struggling to draw her out and succeeding in getting only dull or silly commonplaces, became silent and ill-at-ease. He felt that so far as rousing Emily's jealousy was concerned, he had failed dismally, "Victoria is at her worst to-night," he thought. "She couldn't make anybody jealous." But he had not the acuteness to see that Emily had penetrated his plan—if he had been thus acute, he would not have tried such a scheme, desperate though he was.

All he had accomplished was to bring the two women before his eyes and mind in the sharpest possible contrast, and so increase his own infatuation for Emily. The climax of his discomfiture came when Victoria, sated by what she had eaten and inflamed by what she had drunk, began to scowl jealously at Emily and Kilboggan. But Marlowe did not observe this; his whole mind was absorbed in Emily. He was not disturbed by her politeness to Kilboggan; he hardly noted it. He was revolving her fascinations, her capriciousness, her unreachableness. "I have laughed at married men," he said to himself. "They are revenged. Of all husbands I am the most ridiculous." And

he began to see the merits of the system of locking women away in harems.

He and she drove to her apartment in silence. He sent away the cab and joined her at the outside door which the concierge had opened. "Good night." She spoke distantly, standing in the doorway as if she expected him to leave. "I'm afraid I can't see you to-morrow. Theresa and her General arrived at the Ritz to-night from Egypt, and I've engaged to lunch and drive and dine with them."

"I will go up with you," he said, as if she had not spoken. There was sullen resolve in his tone, and so busy was he with his internal commotion that he did not note the danger fire in her eyes. But she decided that it would not be wise to oppose him there. When they were in her tiny salon, she seated herself, after a significant glance at the clock. He lit a cigarette and leaned against the mantelshelf. He could look down at her—if she had been standing also, their eyes would have been upon a level.

"How repellent he looks," she thought, as she watched him expectantly. "And just when he needs to appear at his best."

"Emily," he began with forced calmness, "the time has come when we must have a plain talk, It can't be put off any longer."

She was sitting with her arms and her loosely-clasped, still gloved hands upon the table, staring across it into the fire. "I must not anger him,"

she was saying to herself. "The time has passed when a plain talk would do any good." Aloud she said: "I'm tired, George—and not in a good humour. Can't you——"

Her impatience to be rid of him made him desperate. "I must speak, Emily, I must," he replied. "For many months—in fact for nearly a year of our year and four months—I've seen that our plan was a failure. We're neither bound nor free, neither married nor single. We—I, at least—am exposed to—all sorts of temptations. I need you—your sympathy, your companionship—all the time. I see you only often enough to tantalise me, to keep me in a turmoil that makes happiness impossible. And," he looked at her uneasily, appealingly, "each time I see you, I find or seem to find that you have drifted further away from me."

She did not break the silence—she did not know what to say. To be frank was to anger him. To evade was impossible.

"Emily," he went on, "you know that I love you. I wish you to be happy and I know that you don't wish me to be miserable. I ask you to give up, or at least put aside for the time, these ideas of yours. Let us announce our marriage and try to work out our lives in the way that the experience of the world has found best. Let us be happy again—as we were in the beginning."

His voice vibrated with emotion. She sighed and there were tears in her eyes and her voice was trembling as she answered: "There isn't anything

I wouldn't do, George, to bring back the happiness we had. But—" she shook her head mournfully, "it is gone, dear." A tear escaped and rolled down her cheek. "It's gone."

He was deceived by her manner and by his hopes and longings into believing that he was not appealing in vain; and there came back to him some of the self-confidence that had so often won for him with women. "Not if we both wish it, and will it, and try for it, Emily."

"It's gone," she repeated, "gone. We can't call it back."

"Why do you say that, dear?"

"Don't ask me. I can't be untruthful with you, and telling the truth would only rouse the worst in us both. You know, George, that I wouldn't be hopeless about it, if there were any hope. We've drifted apart. We can go on as we are now—friends. Or we can—can—drift still further—apart. But we can't come together again."

"Those are very serious words, my dear," he said, trying to hide his anger. "Don't you think you owe me an explanation?"

"Please, George—let me write it to you, if you must have it. Spare me. It is so hard to speak honestly. Please!"

"If you can find the courage to speak, I can find the patience to listen," he said with sarcasm. "As we are both intelligent and sensible, I don't think you need be alarmed about there being a 'scene.' What is the matter, Emily? Let us clear the air."

"We've changed—that's all. I'm not regretting what we did. I wouldn't give it up for anything. But—we've changed."

"*I* have not changed. I'm the same now as then, except that I appreciate you more than I did at first. Month by month you've grown dearer to me. And——"

"Well, then, it is I who have changed," she interrupted, desperately. "It's not strange, is it, George? I was, in a way, inexperienced when we were married, though I didn't think so. And life looks very different to me now." She could not go on without telling him that she had found him out, without telling him how he had shrivelled and shrunk until the garb of the ideal in which she had once clothed him was now a giant's suit upon a pigmy—pitiful, ridiculous. "How can I help it that my mind has changed? I thought so and so—I no longer think so and so, Put yourself in my place, dear—the same thing might have happened to you about me."

Many times the very same ideas had formed in his mind as he had exhausted his interest in one woman after another. They were familiar to him—these ideas. And how they mocked him now! It seemed incredible that he, hitherto always the one who had broken it off, should be in this humiliating position.

"It's all due to that absurd plan of ours," he said bitterly. "If we had gone about marriage in a sensible way, we should have grown together.

As it is, you've exaggerated trifles into mountains and are letting them crush our happiness to death." His tone became an appeal. "Emily—my dear—my wife—you must not!"

She did not answer. "If we'd lived together I'd have found him out just the same—more quickly," she thought. "And either I'd have degraded myself through timidity and dependence, or else I'd have left him."

"You admit that our plan has been a failure?" he went on.

She nodded.

"Then we must take the alternative."

She grew pale and looked at him with dread in her eyes—the universal human dread of finalities.

"We must try my plan," he said. "We must try married life in the way that has succeeded—at least in some fashion—far oftener than it has failed."

"Oh!" She felt relieved, but also she regretted that he had not spoken as she feared he would speak. She paused to gather courage, turned her face almost humbly up to him, and said: "I wish I could, George. But don't urge me to do that. Let us go on as we are, until—until—Let us wait. Let us——"

He threw back his head haughtily. The patience of his vanity was worn through. "No," he said. "That would be folly. It must be settled one way or the other, Emily." He looked at her, his courage quailing before the boldness of his words. But he saw that she was white and trembling, and

misunderstood it. He said to himself: "She must be firmly dealt with. She's giving in—a woman always does in the last ditch."

"No," he repeated. "The door must be either open or shut. Either I am your husband, or I go out of your life."

"You *can't* mean that, George?" She was so agitated that she rose and came round the table to face him. "Why shouldn't we wait—and hope? We still care each for the other, and—it hurts, oh, how it *hurts*—even to think of you as out of my life."

He believed that she was yielding. He put his hand on her arm. "Dearest, there has been too much indecision already, You must choose between your theories and our happiness. Which will you take? You must choose here and now. Shall I go or stay?"

She went slowly back to her chair and sat down and again stared into the fire. "To-morrow," she said at last. "I will decide to-morrow."

"No—to-night—now." He went to her and sat beside her. He put his arm around her. "I love you—I love you," he said in a low tone, kissing her. "You—my dearest—how can you be so cruel? Love is best. Let us be happy."

At the clasp of his arm and the touch of his lips, once so potent to thrill her, she grew cold all over.

What he had thought would be the triumphant climax of his appeal made every nerve in her body cry out in protest against a future spent with him.

She would have pushed him away, if she had not pitied him and wished not to offend him. "Don't ask me to decide to-night," she pleaded. "Please!"

"But you have decided, dearest. We shall be happy. We shall——"

She gradually drew away from him, and to the surface of her expression rose that iron inflexibility, usually so completely concealed by her beauty and gentleness and sweetness. "If I must decide—if you force me to decide, then—George, my heart is aching with the past, aching with the loneliness that stares horribly from the future. But I cannot, I cannot do as you ask." And she burst into tears, sobbing as if her heart were breaking. "I cannot," she repeated. "I must not."

All the ugliness which years of unbridled indulgence of his vanity had bred in him was roused by her words. Such insolence from a woman, one of the sex that had been his willing, yielding instrument to amusement, and that woman his wife! But he had talked so freely to her of his alleged beliefs in the equality of the sexes, he had urged and boasted and professed so earnestly, that he did not dare unmask himself. Instead, with an effort at self-control that whitened his lips, he said: "You no doubt have reasons for this—this remarkable attitude. Might I venture to inquire what they are? I do not fancy the idea of being condemned unheard."

"Unheard? *I*—condemn *you* unheard! George, do not be unjust to me. You know—you must

know—that there was not a moment when my heart was not pleading your cause. Do you think I have not suffered as I saw my love being murdered—my love which I held sacred while you were outraging and desecrating it."

"It is incredible!" he exclaimed. "Emily, who has been lying to you about me? Who has been poisoning your mind against me?"

"You—George." She said it quietly, sadly. "No one else in all this world could have destroyed you with me."

"I do not understand," he protested. But his eyes shifted rapidly, then turned away from her full gaze, fixed upon him without resentment or anger, with only sorrow and a desire to spare him pain.

"I could remind you of several things—you remember them, do you not? But they were not the real cause. It was, I think, the little things—it always is the little things, like drops of water wearing away the stone. And they wore away the feeling I had for you—carried it away grain by grain. Forgive me, George—." The tears were streaming down her face. "I loved you—you were my life—I have lost you. And I'm alone—and a woman. No, no—don't misunderstand my crying—my love is dead. Sometimes I think I ought to hate you for killing it. But I don't."

"Thank you," he said, springing to his feet. His lips were drawn back in a sneer and he was shaking with anger. He took up his hat and coat. "I shall

not intrude longer." He bowed with mock respect. "Good night—good-*bye*."

"George!" She started up. "We must not part, with you in anger against me."

He gave her a furious look and left the apartment. "What a marriage!" he said to himself. "Bah! She'll send me a note in the morning." But this prophecy was instantly faced with the memory of her expression as she gave her decision.

And Emily did not send for him. She tore up in the morning the note she rose in the night to write.

The next evening while she and the Waylands were dining at the Ritz, Victoria Fenton came in with Kilboggan and sat where Emily could study her at leisure.

"Isn't that a beautiful woman?" she said to Theresa.

"Yes—a gorgeous animal," Theresa replied, after a critical survey. "And how she does love food!"

Emily was grateful.

"She looks rather common too," Theresa continued. "What a bad face the fellow she's with has."

Emily tried to extract comfort out of these confirmations of her opinion of the couple she was blaming for Marlowe's forcing the inevitable issue at a most inopportune time. But her spirits refused to rise. "It's of no use to deny it," she said to herself, with a sick and sinking heart. "I shall miss him dreadfully. What can take his place?"

She wished to be alone; the dinner seemed an interminable prospect, was an hour and a half of counted and lingering minutes. When the coffee was served she announced a severe headache, insisted on going at once and alone, would permit escort only to a cab. As she went she seemed to be passing, deserted and forlorn, through a world of comrades and lovers—men two and two, women two and two, men and women together in pairs or in parties. Out in the Champs Elysees, stars and soft, warm air, and love-inviting shadows among the trees; here and there the sudden dazzling blaze of the lights of a café chantant, and music; a multitude of cabs rolling by, laughter or a suggestion of romance floating in the wake of each. "Hide yourself!" the city and the night were saying to her, "Hide your heartache! Nobody cares, nobody wishes to see!"

And she hastened to hide herself, to lie stunned in the beat of a black and bitter sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THE REAL TRAGEDY OF LIFE."

MARLOWE had been held above his normal self, not by Emily, but by an exalting love for her. Except in occasional momentary moods of exuberant animalism, he had not been low and coarse. Whatever else might be said of the love affairs whose tombstones strewed his past, it could not be said that they were degrading to the parties at interest. But there was in his mind a wide remove between all the others and Emily. His love for her was as far above him as her love for him after she ceased to respect him had been beneath her. And her courage and independence came to her rescue none too soon. He could not much longer have persisted in a state so unnatural to his character and habit. Indeed it was unconsciously the desire to get her where he could gradually lead her down to his fixed and unchangeable level, that forced him on to join that disastrous issue.

As he journeyed toward London the next night, he was industriously preparing to eject love for her by a vigorous campaign of consolation. Vanity had never ceased to rule him. It had tolerated

love so long as love seemed to be coöperating with it. It now resumed unchecked sway.

Before he went to Paris he was much stirred by Victoria's beauty. He thought that fear of her becoming a menace to his loyalty had caused him to appeal to Emily. And naturally he now turned toward Victoria, and made ready for a deliberately reckless infatuation. He plunged the very afternoon of his return to London, and he was soon succeeding beyond the bounds which his judgment had set in the planning. This triumph over a humilating defeat was won by many and powerful allies—resentment against Emily for her wounds to his vanity, craving for consolation, a vigorous and passionate imagination, the desire to show his superiority over the fascinating Kilboggan, and, strongest of all, Victoria's fame and extraordinary physical charms. If Emily could have looked into his mind two weeks after he left her, she would have been much chagrined, and would no doubt have fallen into the error of fancying that his love had not been genuine and, for him, deep.

He erected Victoria into an idol, put his good sense out of commission, fell down and worshipped. He found her a reincarnation of some wonderful Greek woman who had inspired the sculptors of Pericles. He wrote her burning letters. When he was with her he gave her no opportunity to show him whether she was wise or silly, deep or shallow, intelligent or stupid. When she did speak he heard, not her words, but only the vibrations of that voice

which had made her the success of the season—the voice that entranced all and soon seemed to him to strike the chord to which every fibre of his every nerve responded. He dreamed of those gold braids, unwound and showering about those strange, lean, maddening shoulders and arms of hers.

In that mood, experience, insight into the ways and motives of women went for no more than in any other mood of any other mode of love. He knew that he was in a delirium, incapable of reason or judgment. But he had no desire to abate, perhaps destroy, his pleasure by sobering and steadying himself.

He convinced himself that Kilboggan was an unsatisfied admirer of Victoria. When Kilboggan left her to marry the rich wife his mother had at last found for him, he believed that the "nobleman" had been driven away by Victoria because she feared her beloved Marlowe disapproved of him. And when he found that Victoria would never be his until they should marry, he began to cast about to free himself. After drafting and discarding many letters, and just when he was in despair—"It's impossible even to begin right"—he had what seemed to him an inspiration. "The telegraph! One does not have to begin or end a telegram; and it can be abrupt without jar, and terse without baldness." He sent away his very first effort:

EMILY BROMFIELD,
— Boulevard Haussmann, Paris.

Will you consent to quiet Dakota divorce on ground of incompatibility. No danger publicity.

You will not need leave Paris or take any trouble whatever. Please telegraph answer to — Dover Street, Piccadilly.

MARLOWE.

He was so bent upon his plan that not until he had handed in the telegram did the other side of what he was doing come forcibly to him. With a sudden explosion there were flung to the surface of his mind from deep down where Emily was uneasily buried, a mass of memories, longings, hopes, remnants of tenderness and love, regrets, remorse. He had no definite impulse to recall the telegram but, as he went out into the thronged and choked Strand, he forgot where he was and let the crowd bump and thump and drift him into a doorway; and he stood there, not thinking, but feeling—forlorn, acutely sensitive of the loneliness and futility of life.

"I was just going to ask you to join me at luncheon," said a man at his side—Blackwell, an old acquaintance. "But if you feel as you look, I prefer my own thoughts."

"I was thinking of a paragraph I read in *Figaro* this morning," said Marlowe. "It went on to say that the real tragedy of life is not the fall of splendid fortunes, nor the death of those who are beloved, nor any other of the obvious calamities, but the petty, inglorious endings of friendships and loves that have seemed eternal."

When Marlowe went to his lodgings after luncheon, he found Emily's answer: "Certainly, and I know I can trust you completely."

He expected a note from her, but none came.

He cabled for leave of absence and in the following week sailed for New York. He "established a residence" one morning at Petersville, an obscure county seat in a remote corner of South Dakota, engaged a lawyer for himself and another for Emily in the afternoon, and in the evening set out for New York. At the end of three months, spent in New York, he returned to his "residence"—a bedroom in Petersville. The case was called the afternoon of his arrival. Emily "put in an appearance" through her lawyer, and he submitted to the court a letter from her in which she authorised him to act for her, and declared that she would never return to her husband. After a trial which lasted a minute and three-quarters—consumed in reading Emily's letter and in Marlowe's testimony—the divorce was granted. The only publicity was the never-read record of the Petersville court.

Marlowe reappeared in London after an absence of three months and three weeks. When Victoria completed her tour of the provinces, they were married and went down to the South Coast for the honeymoon.

The climax of a series of thunderclaps in revelation of Victoria as an intimate personality came at breakfast the next morning. She was more beautiful than he had ever seen her, and her voice had its same searching vibrations. But he could think of neither as he watched her "tackle"—the only word which seemed to him descriptive—three enormous mutton chops in rapid succession. He noted each

time her long white teeth closed upon a mouthful of chop and potato; and as she chewed with now one cheek and now the other distended and with her glorious eyes bright like a feeding beast's, he repeated to himself again and again: "My God, what have I done?"—not tragically, but with a keen sense of his own absurdity. He turned away from her and stood looking out across the channel toward France—toward Emily.

"What shall I do?" he said to himself. "What shall I do?"

He was compelled to admit that she was not in the least to blame. She had made no pretences to him. She had simply accepted what he cast at her feet, what he fell on his knees to beg her to take. She had not deceived him. Her hair, her teeth—what greedy, gluttonous teeth!—her long, slender form, her voice, all were precisely as they had promised. He went over their conversations. He remembered much that she had said—brief commonplaces, phrases which revealed her, but which he thought wonderful as they came to his entranced ears upon that shimmering stream of sound. Not an idea! Not an intelligent thought except those repeated—with full credit—from the conversation of others.

"Fool! Fool!" he said to himself. "I am the most ridiculous of men. If I tried to speak, I should certainly bray."

He turned and looked at her as she sat with her back toward him. Her hair was caught up loosely, coil on coil of dull gold. It just revealed the nape

of her neck above the lace of her dressing gown. "Yes, it is a beautiful neck! She is a beautiful woman." Yet the thought that that beauty was his, thrust at him like the red-hot fork of a teasing devil. "It is what I deserve," he said. "But that makes it the more exasperating. What *shall* I do?"

"Why are you so quiet, sweetheart?" she said, throwing her napkin on the table. "Come here and kiss me and say some of those pretty things. You Americans do have a queer accent. But you know how to make love cleverly. No wonder you caught poor, foolish me."

"My *wife*," he thought. "Good God, what have I done? It must be a ghastly dream." But he crossed the room and sat opposite her without looking at her. "I'm not very fit this morning," he said.

"I thought you weren't." Her spell-casting voice was in the proper stage-tone for sympathy. "I saw that you didn't eat."

"Eat!" He shuddered and closed his eyes to prevent her seeing the sullen fury which blazed there. He was instantly ashamed of himself. Only—if she *would* avoid reminding him of the chops and potato disappearing behind that gleaming screen of ivory. He was sitting on a little sofa. She sat beside him and drew his head down upon her shoulder. She let her long, cool fingers slide slowly back and forth across his forehead.

"I *do* love you." There was a ring of reality in her tone beneath the staginess. "We are going to be very, very happy. You are so different from

Englishmen. And I'm afraid you'll weary of your stupid English wife. I'm not a bit clever, you know, like the American women."

He was unequal to a hypocritical protest in words, so he patted her reassuringly on the arm. He was less depressed now that she had stopped eating and was at her best. He rose and with ashamed self-reproach kissed her hair. "I shall try to make you not repent your bargain," he said, with intent to conceal the deeper meaning of his remark. "But I must send off some telegrams. Then we'll go for a drive. I need the air."

He liked her still better as she came down in a becoming costume; he particularly liked the agitation her appearance created in the lounging rooms. They got through the day well, and after a dinner with two interesting men—a dinner at which he drank far more than usual—he felt temporarily reconciled to his fate.

But at the end of a week, in which he had so managed it that they were alone as little as possible he had not one illusion left. He did not love her. She did not attract him. She was tiresome through and through. Instead of giving life a new meaning and him a new impetus, she was an added burden, another source of irritation. He admitted to himself that he had been tricked by his senses, as a boy of twenty might have been. He felt like a professional detective who has yielded to a familiar swindling game.

She had grown swiftly fonder of him, won by his

mental superiority, by his gentleness exaggerated in his anxiety not basely to make her suffer for his folly. "He's a real gentleman," she thought. "His manners are not pretence. I've done much better than I fancied." And she began further to try his nerves by a dog-like obedience. She would not put on a dress without first consulting him. She had no will but his in any way—except one. She insisted upon ordering her own meals. There she did not care what he thought.

Once they were back in London, his chain became invisible and galled him only in imagination. She had an exacting profession, and so had he. When they were together, they would talk about her work, and, as he was interested in it and intelligent about it and she docile and receptive, he was content. While she was of no direct use to him, he found that she was of great indirect use. He worked more steadily, more ambitiously. The idea woman, which had always been distracting and time-wasting, ceased to have any part in his life.

He turned his attention to play-writing and play-carpentry. He became a connoisseur of food and drink, a dabbler in old furniture and tapestries. He did not regret the event of his first venture in marriage and only venture in love. "As it is, it's a perfect gem," he finally came to sum the matter up, "a completed work of art. If I'd had my way, still it must have ended some time, and not so artistically or so comfortably." When he reflected thus, his waist-line was slowly going.

CHAPTER XIX.

EMILY REFUSES CONSOLATION.

THE Waylands took a small house at Neuilly for the summer, and Emily spent a great deal of time there. She found Theresa less lively but also less jarring than in their boarding-house days. Neither ever spoke of those days, or of Demorest and Marlowe—Theresa, because she had no wish to recall that she had been other than the fashionable and preeminently respectable personage she had rapidly developed into; Emily, because her heart was still sore, and the place where Marlowe had been was still an uncomfortable and at times an aching void.

In midsummer came the third member of the Wayland family—Edgar. Like his father, he had changed, had developed into a type of the respectable radically different from anything of which she had thought him capable. A cleaner mind now looked from his commonplace face, and he watched with approving interest the pleasing, if monotonous, spectacle of his father's domestic solidity. On the very day on which Emily received her copy of the decree of the Petersville court, he took her out to dinner.

She had sat in her little salon with the three documents in the case before her—the two tangible documents, the marriage certificate and the decree of divorce; and the intangible but most powerful document, her memory of Marlowe from first scene to last. When it was time for her to dress, she went to her bedroom window, tore the two papers into bits and sent them fluttering away over the housetops on the breeze. "The incident is closed," she said, with a queer short laugh that was also a sob. She had Wayland take her to a little restaurant in the Rue Marivaux, her and Marlowe's favourite dining place—a small room, with tasteful dark furnishings and rose-coloured lights that made it somewhat brighter than clear twilight.

As they sat there, with the orchestra sending down from a plant-screened alcove high in the wall the softest and gentlest intimations of melody, Emily deliberately gave herself up to the mood that had been growing all the afternoon.

Edgar knew her well enough to leave her to her thoughts through the long wait and into the second course. Then he remonstrated. "You're not drinking. You're not eating. You're not listening—I've asked you a question twice."

"Yes, I was listening," replied Emily—"listening to a voice I don't like to hear, yet wouldn't silence if I could—the voice of experience."

"Well—you look as if you'd had a lot of experience—I was going to say, you look sadder, but it isn't that. And—you're more beautiful than ever,

Emily. You always did have remarkable eyes, and now they're—simply wonderful and mysterious."

Emily laughed. "Oh, they're hiding such secrets —such secrets!"

"Yes, I suppose you have been through a lot. You talk more like a married woman than a young girl. But of course you don't know life as a man knows it. No nice woman can."

"Can a nice man?"

"Oh, there aren't any nice men. At least you'd hate a nice man. I think a fellow ought to be experienced, ought to go around and learn what's what, and then he ought to settle down. Don't you?"

"I'm not sure. I'm afraid a good many of that kind of fellows are no more attractive than the 'nice' men. Still, it's surprising how little of you men's badness gets beyond the surface, You come in and hold up your dirty hands and faces for us women to wash. And we wash them, and you are shiny and clean and all ready to be husbands and fathers. I think I've seen signs of late that little Edgar Wayland wishes to have *his* hands and face washed."

The red wine at this restaurant in the Rue Marivaux is mild and smooth, but full of sentiment and courage. Edgar had made up for Emily's neglect of it, and it enabled him to advance boldly to the settlement of a matter which he had long had in mind, as Emily would have seen, had she not been so intent upon her own affairs.

"Yes—I do want my hands and face washed," he said nervously, turning his glass by its stem round

and round upon the table. "And I want you to do it, Emmy."

Emily was grateful to him for proposing to her just then. And her courage was so impaired by her depression that she could not summarily reject a chance to settle herself for life in the way that is usually called "well." "Haven't I been making a mistake?" she had been saying to herself all that day—and in vaguer form on many preceding days. "Is the game worth the struggle? Freedom and independence haven't brought me happiness. Wasn't George right, after all? Why should I expect so much in a man, expect so much from life?" It seemed to her at the moment that she had better have stopped thinking, had better have cast aside her ideals of self-respect and pride, and have sunk with Marlowe. "And Edgar would let me alone. Why not marry him?

She evaded his proposal by teasing him about his flight from her two years before—"Only two years," she thought. "How full and swift life is, if one keeps in midstream."

"Don't talk about that, Emmy, please," begged Edgar humbly. "I don't need any reminder that I once had a chance and threw it away."

"But you didn't have a chance," replied Emily.

"No, I suppose not. I suppose you wouldn't have had me, if it had come to the point."

"I don't mean that. I'd have had *you*, but you wouldn't, couldn't, have had *me*. The I of those days and the I of to-day aren't at all the same per-

son. If I'd married you then, there would have been one kind of a me. As it is, there is a different kind of a me, as different as—as the limits of life permit."

"What has done it—love?" he asked.

"Chiefly freedom. Freedom!" Her sensitive face was suddenly all in a glow.

"I know I'm not up to you, Emily," he said. "But——"

"Let's not talk about it, Edgar. Why spoil our evening?"

Theresa came the next afternoon and took her for a drive. "Has Edgar been proposing to you?" she asked.

"I think he's feeling more or less sentimental," Emily replied, not liking the intimate question.

"Now, don't think I'm meddling. Edgar told me, and has been talking about you all morning. He wished me to help him."

"Well, what do you think?"

"Marry him, Emily. He'd make a model husband. He's not very mean about money, and he's fond of home and children. I'd like it on my own account, of course. It would be just the thing in every way."

"But then there's my work, my independence, my freedom."

"Do be sensible. You can work as hard as ever you like, even if you are married. And you'd be freer than now and would have a lots better time, no matter what your idea of a good time is."

"But I don't love him. I'm not sure that I even like him."

"So much the better. Then you'll be agreeably disappointed. If you expect nothing or worse, you get the right kind of a surprise; whereas, when a woman loves a man, she idealises him and is sure to get the wrong kind of a surprise."

"You can't possibly know how wise what you've just said is, Theresa Dunham," said Emily. "But there is one thing wiser—and that is, not to marry, not to risk. I'm able to make my living. My extravagant tastes are under control. And I'm content—except in ways in which nothing he can give me could help."

Theresa was irritated that Emily's "queer ideas" were a force in her life, not a mere mask for disappointment at not having been able to marry well. And Emily could not discuss the situation with her. Theresa might admit that it was barely possible for a woman to refuse to marry except for love. But a woman disputing the necessity of marriage for any and all women, if they were not to make a disgraceful failure of life—Emily could see Theresa pooh-poohing the idea that such a creature really existed among the sane. Further, if Emily explained her point of view, she would be by implication assailing Theresa for her marriage.

"I'm sure," Theresa went on, "that Edgar's father would be satisfied. If he didn't know you he wouldn't like it. He has such strict ideas on the subject of women. He thinks a woman's mission

is to be a wife and mother. He says nature plainly intended woman to have motherhood as her mission."

"Not any more, I should say, than she intended man to have fatherhood as his mission."

"Well, at any rate, he thinks so, and it gives him something to talk about. He thinks a woman who is not at least a wife ought to be ashamed of herself."

"But if no man will have her?"

"Then she ought to sit out of sight, where she will offend as little as possible."

"But if she has to make a living?"

"Oh, she can do something quiet and respectable, like sewing or housework."

"But why shouldn't she work at whatever will produce the best living?"

"She ought to be careful not to be unwomanly."

"Womanliness, as you call it, won't bring in bread or clothes or pay rent," said Emily. "And I can't quite see why it should be womanly to make a poor living at drudgery and unwomanly to make a good living at agreeable work."

"Oh, well, you know, Emmy, that nature never intended women to work."

"I'm sure I don't know what nature intended. Sometimes I've an idea she's like a painter who, when they asked him what his canvas was going to be, said, 'Oh, as it may happen.' But whatever nature's intentions, women do work. I'm not thinking about an unimportant little class of women

who spend their time in dressing and simpering at one another. I'm thinking of women—the race of women. They work as the men work. They bear more than half the burden. They work side by side with the men—in the shops and offices and schoolrooms, on the farms and in the homes. They toil as hard and as intelligently and as usefully as the men ; and, if they're married, they usually make a bare living. The average husband thinks he's doing his wife a favour by letting her live with him. And he is furious if she asks what he's doing with their joint earnings."

"You put it well," said Theresa. "You ought to say that to Percival. I suppose he could answer you."

"No doubt I'm boring you," said Emily. "But it makes me indignant for women to accept men's absurd ideas on the subject of themselves—to think that they've got to submit and play the hypocrite in order to fit men's silly so-called ideals of them. And the worst of it is——"

Emily stopped and when she began again, talked of the faces and clothes in the passing carriages. She had intended to go on to denounce herself for weakness in being unable to follow reason and altogether shake off ideas which she regarded as false and foolish and discreditable. "As if," she thought "any toil in making my own living could possibly equal the misery of being tied to a commonplace fellow like Edgar, with my life one long denial of all that I believe honest and true. I his wife, the

mother of his children, and listening to his narrow prosings day in and day out—it's impossible!"

She straightened herself and drew in a long breath of the bright air of the Bois.

"Listen to me, Theresa," she said. "Suppose you were walking along a road alone—not an especially pleasant road—a little dusty and, at times rough—but still on the whole not a bad road. And suppose you saw a clumsy, heavy manikin, dropped by some showman and lying by the wayside. Would you say, 'I am tired. The road is rough. I'll pick up this manikin and strap it on my back to make the journey lighter?'"

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Theresa.

"Why, I mean that I'm not going to marry—not just yet—I think."

CHAPTER XX.

BACHELOR GIRLS.

IN September Emily, convinced that she could not afford to stay away from her own country longer, got herself transferred to the New York staff and crossed with the Waylands. In the crowd on the White Star pier she saw Joan, now a successful playright or "plagiarist" as she called herself, because the most of her work was translating and adapting. And presently Joan and she were journeying in a four-wheeler piled high with trunks, toward the San Remo where Joan was living.

"Made in Paris," said Joan, her arm about Emily and her eyes delighting in Emily's stylish French travelling costume. "You even speak with a Paris accent. How you have changed!"

"But not so much as you. You are not so thin. And you've lost that stern, anxious expression. And you have the air—what is it?—the air that comes to people when their merits have been publicly admitted."

Joan did indeed look a person who is in the habit of being taken into account. She had always been good looking, if somewhat severe and business-like. Now she was handsome. She was not of the

type of woman with whom a man falls ardently in love—she showed too plainly that she dealt with all the facts of life on a purely intellectual basis.

"I've been expecting news that you were marrying," said Emily.

"I?" Joan smiled cynically. "I feel as you do about marriage—except——"

She paused and reddened as Emily began to laugh. "No—not that," she went on. "I'm not the least in love. But I've made up my mind to marry the first intelligent, endurable, self-supporting man that asks me. I'm thirty-two years old and—I want children."

"Children! You—children?"

"Yes—I. I've changed my mind now that I can afford to think of such things. I like them for themselves and—they're the only hope one has of getting a real object in life. Working for oneself is hollow. I once thought I'd be happy if I got where I am now—mistress of my time and sure of an income. But I find that I can't hope to be contented going on alone. And that means children."

"You don't know how you surprise me." Emily looked thoughtful rather than surprised. "You set me to thinking along a new line. I wonder if I shall ever feel that way?"

"Why, of course. Old age without ties in the new generation is a dismal farce for woman or man. We human beings live looking to the future if we live at all. And unless we have children, we are

certain to be alone and facing the past in old age. You'll change your mind, as I have. Some day you'll begin to feel the longing for children. It may be irrational, but it'll be irresistible."

"Well, I think I'll wait on your experiment. How I love the trolley cars and the tall buildings—they make one feel what a strong, bold race we are, don't they? And I'm simply wild to get to the office."

Emily was assigned to the staff of the Sunday supplements—to read papers and magazines, foreign and domestic, and suggest and occasionally execute features. She liked the work and it left her evenings free; but it was sedentary. This she corrected by walking the three miles from the office to her flat and by swimming at a school in Forty-fourth street three times a week.

She gave much time and thought to her appearance because she was proud of her looks, because they were part of her capital, and because she knew that only by the greatest care could she keep her youth. Joan's interest in personal appearance, so far as she herself was concerned, ended with seeing to cleanliness and to clothing near enough to the fashion to make her a well-dressed woman. It did not disturb her that her hair was slightly thinner than it used to be, or that there were a few small wrinkles at the corners of her eyes. But she was not contemptuous of Emily's far-sighted precautions. On the contrary, she looked upon them as sensible and would have been worried by any sign

of relaxing vigilance. She delighted in Emily's gowns and in the multitude of trifles—collarettes, pins of different styles, stockings of striking and even startling patterns, shoes and boots of many kinds, ribbons, gloves, etc. etc.—wherewith she made her studied simplicity of dress perfect.

"It's wonderful," she said, as she watched Emily unpack. "I don't see how you ever accumulated so much."

"Instinct probably," replied Emily. "I make it a rule never to buy anything I don't need, and never to need anything I don't have money to buy."

They took a flat in Central Park West, near Sixty-sixth street, and Joan insisted upon paying two-thirds of the expenses. Emily yielded, because Joan's arguments were unanswerable—she did use the flat more, as she not only worked there and received business callers, but also did much entertaining; and she could well afford to bear the larger part of the expense, as her income was about eight thousand a year, and Emily had only three thousand. Joan wished to draw Emily into playwriting, but soon gave it up. She had to admit to herself that Emily was right in thinking she had not the necessary imagination—that her mind was appreciative rather than constructive.

"Don't think I'm so dreadfully depressed over it," Emily went on. "It is painful to have limitations as narrow as mine, when one appreciates as keenly as I do. But we can't all have genius

or great talent. Besides, the highest pleasures don't come through great achievement or great ability."

"Indeed, they do not."

Emily's eyes danced, and Joan grew red and smiled foolishly. The meaning back of it was Professor Reed of Columbia. He had been calling on Joan of late frequently, and with significant regularity. He was short and sallow, with a narrow, student's face, and brown eyes, that seemed large and dreamy through his glasses, as eyes behind glasses usually do. He was stiff in manner, because he had had little acquaintance with women. He was in love with Joan in a solemn, old-fashioned way. He was so shy and respectful that if Emily had not been most considerate of other people's privacy, she would have teased Joan by asking her when she was going to propose to him that he propose to her.

He was rigid in his ideas of what constituted propriety for himself, but not in the least disposed to insist upon his standards in others. He felt that in wandering so near to Bohemia as Joan and Emily he was trenching upon the extreme of permissible self-indulgence. If he had been able to suspect Joan of "a past," he would probably have been secretly delighted. He did not believe that she had, when he got beyond the surface of her life —the atmosphere of the playhouse and the newspaper office—and saw how matter-of-fact everything was. But he still clung to vague imaginings of un-

conventionality, so alluring to those who are conventional in thought and action.

Emily's one objection to him was that he sometimes tried to be witty or humorous. Then he became hysterical and not far from silly. But as she knew him better she forgave this. Had she disliked him she would have been able to see nothing else.

"Do you admire strength in a man?" she once asked Joan.

"Yes—I suppose so. I like him to be—well, a man."

"I like a man to be distinctly masculine—strong, mentally and physically. I don't like him to domineer, but I like to feel that he would domineer me if he dared—and could domineer every one except me."

"No, I don't like that. I have my own ideas of what I wish to do. And I wish the man who is anything to me to be willing to help me to do them."

"You want a man-servant, then?"

"No, indeed. But I don't want a master." Joan shut her lips together, and a stern, pained expression came into her face. Emily saw that her book of memory had flung open at an unpleasant page. "No," she continued in a resolute tone, "I want no master. My centre of gravity must remain within myself."

After that conversation Emily understood why Joan liked her intelligent, adoring, timid professor.

"Joan will make him make her happy," she said to herself, amused at, yet admiring, Joan's practical, sensible planning.

* * * * * *

Soon after her return, the Sunday editor called her into his office—her desk was across the room, immediately opposite his door.

"We want a series of articles on what is doing in New York for the poor—especially the foreign poor of the slums. Now, here's the address of a man who can tell you about his own work and also what others are doing—where to send in order to see how it's done, whom it's done for, and so on."

Emily took the slip. It read "Dr. Stanhope,—Grand Street." She set out at once, left the Bowery car at Grand street and walked east through its crowded dinginess. She passed the great towering Church of the Redeemer at the corner of ——— street. The next house was the one she was seeking. A maid answered the door. A sickly looking curate, his shovel-hat standing out ludicrously over a pair of thin, projecting ears, passed her with a "professional" smile that made his tiny, dimpled chin look its weakest. The maid took her card and presently returned to conduct her through several handsome rooms, up heavily carpeted stairs, under an arch, into a connecting house that was furnished with cold and cheap simplicity. The maid pushed open a door and Emily entered a large, high-ceilinged library, that looked as if were the workshop of a toiler of ascetic tastes. At the

farther end at a table-desk sat a man, writing. His back was toward her—a big back, a long, broad, powerful back. He was seated upon a strong, revolving office-chair, yet it seemed too small and too feeble for him.

"Well, my good girl, what can I do for you?" he called over his shoulder, without ceasing to write.

Emily started. She recognised the voice, then the head, neck, shoulders, back. It was the man she had "confessed" in Paris. She was so astonished that she could make no reply, and hardly noted the abstracted patronising tone, the supercilious words and the uncourteous manner. He dropped his pen, laid his great hands on the arms of his chair and swung himself round. His expression changed so swiftly and so tragically that Emily forgot her own surprise and with difficulty restrained her amusement.

He leaped from his chair and strode toward her—bore down upon her. His brilliant, dark eyes expressed amazement, doubt of his sanity. There was a deep flush in his pallid skin just beneath the surface.

"I have come to ask"—began Emily.

"Is it you?" he said, eagerly. "Is it *you?*"

"I beg your pardon." Emily's face showed no recognition and she stood before him, formal and business-like.

"Don't you remember me?" He made an impatient gesture, as if to sweep aside a barrier some-

one had thrust in front of him. "Did I not meet you in Paris?"

"I don't think—I'm sure—that I have not had the pleasure of meeting you. The *Democrat* sent me here to see Doctor Stanhope—"

Again he made the sweeping gesture with his powerful arm. "I am Doctor Stanhope," he said impatiently. Then with earnest directness: "Your manner is an evasion. It is useless, unlike—unexpected in the sort of woman you—you look."

"You cannot ask me to be bound by your conclusions or wishes when they do not agree with my own," said Emily, her tone and look taking the edge from her words, as she did not wish to offend him.

"As you will." He made a gesture of resignation and bowed toward a chair at the corner of his desk. When they were seated, he said, "I am at your service, Miss Bromfield."

He gave her the information she was seeking, suggested the phases of poverty and relief of poverty that would be best for description and illustration. He called in his secretary and dictated notes of instruction to several men who could help her. He requested them to "give Miss Bromfield all possible facilities, as an especial favour to me. I am deeply interested in the articles she is preparing for the *Democrat*."

When the secretary withdrew to write out the letters, he leaned back in his chair and looked at her appealingly. "Shall we be friends?" he asked.

While Emily had been sitting there, so near him, hearing his clear, resolute voice, noting his fascinating mannerisms of strength, gentleness and simplicity, she felt again the charm of power and persuasion that had conquered her when first she saw him. "He makes me feel that he is important, and at the same time that I am important in his eyes," she thought, analysing her vanity as she yielded to it.

"Friends?" she said aloud with a smile. "That means better opportunities for petty treachery, and the chance to assassinate in a crisis. It's a serious matter—friendship, don't you think?"

"Yes," he replied, humour in his eyes. "And again it may mean an offensive and defensive alliance against the world."

"In dreams," she answered, "but not in women's dreams of men or in men's dreams of women."

Just then a voice called from the hall, "Arthur!" —a shrill, shrewish voice with a note of habitual ill-temper in it, yet a ladylike voice.

There was a rustling of skirts and into the room hurried a small, fair woman, thin, and nervous in face, thin and nervous in body, with a sudden bulge of breadth and stoutness at the hips. She was in a tailor gown, expensive and unbecoming. Her hair was light brown, tightly drawn up, with a small knot at the crown of her head. There was a wide, bald expanse behind each ear. She had cold-blue, sensual eyes, the iris looking as if it were a thin button pasted to the ball. Yet she was not un-

attractive, making up in fire what she lacked in beauty.

"As you see, I am engaged," Stanhope said, tranquilly.

"Pardon me for interrupting." There was a covert sting of sarcasm in her voice. "But I must see you."

He rose. "You'll excuse me a moment?" he said to Emily.

He followed his wife into the hall and soon returned to his desk. "Everything begins badly with me," he resumed abruptly. "Since I was a boy at school, the butt of the other boys because I was clumsy and supersensitive, it has been one long fight." His tone was matter-of-fact, but something it suggested rather than uttered made Emily feel as if tears were welling up toward her eyes. "But," he continued, "I go straight on. I sometimes stumble, sometimes crawl, but always straight on."

"What a simple, direct man he is," she thought, "and how strong! In another that would have seemed a boast. From him it seems the literal truth."

"What are you thinking?" he interrupted.

"Just then? I was beginning to think how peculiar you are, and how—how—" her eyes danced—"indiscreet."

"Because of what I did and said in Paris? Because of what I am saying to you now?" He looked at her friendlily. "Oh, no—there you mistake me. I cannot tell why I feel as I do toward

you. But I know that I must be truthful and honest with you, that you have a right to demand it of me, as had no one else I ever knew. I must let you know me as I am."

"You seem delightfully sure that I wish to know."

"I do not think of that at all. Much as I have thought of you, I have never thought 'what does she think of me?' Probably you dismissed me from your mind when you turned away from me in Paris. Probably you will again forget me when you have written your article and passed to other work. But I cannot resist the instinct that impels me on to look upon you as the most important human being in the world for me."

"I believe that you are honest. I don't wish to misunderstand your frankness. I'm too impatient of conventions myself to insist upon them in others —that is, in those who respect the real barriers that hedge every human being until he or she chooses to let them down. But"—Emily hesitated and looked apologetically at this "giant with the heart of a boy," as he seemed to her—"you ought not to forget that everything in your circumstances makes it wrong for you to talk to me thus."

"It seems so, doesn't it?" He looked at her gravely. "It looks as if I were a scoundrel. Yet I don't feel in the least as if I were trying to wrong you in any way. You seem to me far stronger than I. I feel that I am appealing to you for strength."

The secretary entered, laid the letters before him and went away. He signed them mechanically,

folded them and put them in the addressed envelopes. As she rose he rose also and handed them to her.

"After I saw you in Paris," he said, looking down at her as she stood before him, "I thought it all over. I asked myself whether I had been deceived by your beauty, or whether it was the peculiar circumstances of our meeting, of each of us yielding to an impulse; or whether it was my weariness of all that I am familiar with, my desire for the unfamiliar, the new, the adventurous. And it may be all of these, but there is more beyond them all."

He paused, then went on in a voice which so thrilled her that she hardly heard his words: "Yes, a great deal more. I wish something, some one, some *person* to believe in. It is vital to me. I doubt everything and everybody—God, His creatures, myself most of all. And when my eyes fell upon you in Paris, there was that in your face which made me believe in you. I said, 'She is brave, she is honest, she is strong. She could not be petty or false, or cruel.' And—I do believe in you. That is all."

"If you knew," she said, trying to shake off the spell of his voice and his personality, "you would find me a very ordinary kind of sinner. And then, you would of course proceed to denounce me as if I were a fraud, instead of the innocent cause of your deliberate self-deception."

"I don't know what you have done—what particular courses you have taken at life's university.

But I am not so—so deceived in you that I do not note and understand the signs of experience, of—yes, of suffering. I know there must be a cause when at your age a woman can look a man through and through, when she can talk to him sexlessly, when she laughs rarely and smiles reluctantly."

"I am hardly a tragedy," interrupted Emily. "Please don't make me out one of those comical creatures who go through life fancying themselves heroines of melodrama."

"I don't. You are supremely natural and sensible. But—I neither know nor try to guess nor care how you came to be the woman you are. But I do know that you are one of those to whom all experience is a help toward becoming wiser and stronger and better."

It seemed to her as if, in spite of her struggles, she was being drawn toward him irresistibly, toward a fate which at once fascinated and frightened her. "You are dangerously interesting," she said. "But I am staying too long." And with a few words of thanks for his assistance to her work, she went away.

In the street she rapidly recovered herself and her point of view. "A minister!" she thought. "And a married man! And sentimental and mystical!" But in defiance of self-mockery and self-warnings her mind persisted in coming back to him, persisted in revolving ideas about him which her judgment condemned.

CHAPTER XXI.

A "MARRIED MAN."

EMILY spent a week in studying "the work" of the Redeemer parish—the activities of its large staff of "workers" of different grades, from ministers down through deacons, deaconesses, teachers, nurses, to unskilled helpers. She attended its schools—day and night; its lectures; its kindergartens and day nurseries; its clubs for grown people, for youths and for children. She examined its pawn-shops, its employment-bureaus, its bath-houses. She was surprised by the many ways in which it touched intimately the lives of that quarter of a million people of various races, languages and religions, having nothing in common except human nature, poverty, and ignorance. She was astonished at the amount of good accomplished—at the actual, visible results.

She had no particular interest in religion or belief in the value of speculations about the matters on which religion dogmatises. Her father's casual but effective teachings, the books she had read, the talk of the men and of many of the women she had associated with, the results of her own observations and reflections, had strongly entrenched this disposition

in prejudice. Her adventure into the parish was therefore the more a revelation. And she found also that while everything was done there in the name of religion, little, almost nothing, was said about religion. "The work," except in the church and the chapels at distinctly religious meetings, was wholly secular. Here was simply a great plant for enlightening and cheering on those who grope or sit dumb and blind.

At first she was rather contemptuous of "the workers" and was repelled by certain cheap affectations of speech, thought and manner, common to them all. They were, the most of them, it seemed to her, poorly equipped in brains and narrow in their views of life. But when she got beneath the surface, she disregarded externals in her admiration for their unconscious self-sacrifice, their keen pleasure in helping others—and such "others!"—their limitless patience with dirt, stupidity, shiftlessness, and mendacity. She was profoundly moved by the spectacle of these homely labourers, sowing and reaping unweariedly the arid sands of the slums for no other reward than an occasional blade of sickly grass.

She was standing at the window of one of the women's clubs—the one in Allen street near Grand. It was late in the afternoon and the crowd was homeward-bound from labour. To her it was a forbidding-looking crowd. The blight of ignorance—centuries, innumerable centuries of ignorance—was upon it. Grossness, dulness, craft, mental and physical deformity, streamed monotonously by.

"Depressing, isn't it?"

She started and glanced around. Beside her, reading her thoughts in her face, was Dr. Stanhope. Instead of his baggy, unclerical tweed suit, he was wearing the uniform of his order. It sat strangely upon him, like a livery; and, she thought, he hasn't in the least the look of the liveried, of one who is part of any sort of organisation. "He looks as lone, as 'unorganised,' as self-sufficient, as a mountain."

"Depressing?" she said, shaking her head with an expression of distaste. "It's worse—it's hopeless."

"No,—not hopeless. And you ought not to look at it with disgust. It's the soil—the rotten loam from which the grain and the fruit and the flowers spring."

"I don't think so. To me it's simply a part of the great stagnant, disease-breeding marsh which receives the sewage of society."

"I sha'n't go on with the analogy. But your theory and mine are in the end the same. We all sprang from this; and the top is always flowering and dropping back into it to spring up again."

"I see nothing but ignorance that cannot learn. It seems to me nearly all the effort spent upon it is wasted. If nature were left alone, she would drain, drain, drain, until at last she might drain it away."

"Yours is an unjust view, I think. I won't say anything," this with a faint smile, "about the souls that are worth saving. But if we by working here

open the way for a few, maybe a very few, to rise who would otherwise not have risen, we have not worked in vain. My chief interest is the children."

"Yes," she admitted, her face lighting up, "there *is* hope for the children. You don't know how it has affected me to see what you and your people are doing for them. It's bound to tell. It *is* telling."

He looked at her as if she were his queen and had bestowed some honour upon him which he had toiled long to win. "Thank you," he said. "It means a great deal to me to have you say that."

She gave him a careless glance of derisive incredulity.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You are amusing," she replied. "Your expression of gratitude was overacted. It was—was—grotesque."

He drew back as if he had received a blow. "You are cruel," he said.

"Because I warn you that you are overestimating my vanity? It seems to me, that is friendly kindness. I'm helping you on."

"I do not know anything about your vanity. But I do know how I feel toward you—what every word from you means to me."

There was wonder and some haughtiness in her steady gaze, as she said: "I do not understand you at all. Your words are the words of an extravagant but not very adroit flatterer. Your looks are the looks of a man without knowledge of the world and without a sense of proportion."

"Why?"

She thought a moment, then turned toward him with her frank, direct expression. "I have been going about in your parish for several days now. And everywhere I have heard of you. Your helpers and those that are helped all talk of you as if you were a sort of god. You *are* their god. They draw their inspiration, their courage, their motive-power from you. They work, they strive, because they wish to win your praise."

"I have been here fifteen years," he explained with unaffected modesty, "and as I am at the head, naturally everything seems to come from me. In reality I do little."

"That is not to my point. I wasn't trying to compliment you. What I mean is that I find you are a man of influence and power in this community. And you must be conscious of this power. And since you evidently wield it well, you have it by right of merit. Yet you wish me to believe that you bow down in this humble fashion before a woman of whom you know nothing." She laughed.

"Well?" he said, looking impassively out of the window.

"It is ridiculous, impossible. And if it were true, it would be disgraceful—something for you to be ashamed of."

He turned his head slowly until his eyes met hers. She felt as if she were being caught up by some mighty force, perilous but intoxicating. She tried to look away but could not.

"What a voice you have!" he said. "It makes me think of an evening long ago in England. I was walking alone in the moonlight through one of those beautiful hedged roads when suddenly I heard a nightingale. It foretold your voice—you."

She turned her eyes away and looked upon the darkening street. The sense of his nearness thrilled through her in waves that made her giddy.

"Now, do you understand?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered in a low voice, "I understand—and, for the first time in my life, I'm afraid."

"Then you know why I, too, am afraid?"

"You must not speak of it again."

They stood there silently for a moment or two, then she said: "I must be going." And she was saying to herself in a panic, "I am mad. Where is my honour—my self-respect? Where is my common-sense?"

"I will go with you to the car," he said. "I feel that I ought to be ashamed. And it frightens me that I am not. Perhaps I am ashamed, but proud of it."

"Good-night." She held out her hand. "Good-bye. I am used to going about alone. I prefer it. Good-bye."

* * * * * *

Those were days of restless waiting, of advance and retreat, of strong resolves suddenly and weakly crumbling into shifting mists. She said to herself many times each day, "I shall not, I cannot see him again." She assured herself that she had herself

under proper control. But there was a voice that called mockingly from a subcellar of her mind: "I am a prisoner, but I am *here*."

One morning at breakfast, after what she thought a very adroit "leading up," she ventured to say to Joan: "What do you think of a woman who falls in love with a married man?"

Joan kept her expression steady. To herself she said: "I thought so. It isn't in a woman's nature to be thoroughly interested in life unless there is some one man." Aloud she said: "Why, I think she ought to bestir herself to fall out again."

"But suppose that she didn't wish to."

"Then I think she is—imbecile."

"You are so uncompromising, Joan," protested Emily.

"Well, I don't think much of women who intrigue, or of men either. It's a sneaky, lying, muddy business."

"But suppose you accidentally fell in love with a married man?"

"I can't suppose it. I don't believe people fall in love accidentally. They're simply in love with love, and they have morbid, unhealthy tastes. Besides, married men are drearily unromantic. They always look so—so married."

"Well, then, what do you think of a married man who falls in love with a girl?"

"Very poorly, indeed. And if he tells her of it, he ought to be pilloried."

"You are becoming—conventional."

"Not at all. But to fall in love honestly a man and a woman must both be free. If either has ties, each is bound from the other by them. And if it's the man that is tied, there's simply no excuse for him if he doesn't heed the first sign of danger."

"But it might be a terrible temptation to both of them. Love is very —very compelling, isn't it?"

"There's a great deal of nonsense talked about love, as you must know by this time. Of course, love is alluring, and when indulged in by sensible people, not to excess, it's stimulating, like alcohol in moderation. But because cocaine could make me temporarily happier than anything else in the world, does that make it sensible for me to form the cocaine habit?"

Joan paused, then added with emphasis: "And there is a great deal that is called love that is no more love than the wolf was Little Red Riding-hood's grandmother."

Emily felt that Joan was talking obvious common sense and that she herself agreed with her entirely—so far as her reason was concerned. "But," she thought, "the trouble is that reason doesn't rule." A few days later she went to dinner at Theresa's. As she entered the dining-room the first person upon whom her eyes fell was a tall, slender girl, fair, handsome through health and high color, and with Stanhope's peculiarly courageous yet gentle dark eyes— "It must be his sister." She asked Theresa.

"It's Evelyn Stanhope," she replied, "the daugh-

ter of our clergyman. He's a tremendously handsome man. All the woman are crazy about him." Theresa looked at her peculiarly.

"What is it?" asked Emily, instantly taking fright, though she did not show it.

"I thought perhaps you'd heard."

"Heard what?"

"All about Miss Stanhope and—and Edgar."

"You don't mean that Edgar has recovered from *me?* How unflattering!" Emily's smile was delightfully natural—and relieved.

"He's got love and marriage on the brain, and he's broken-hearted, you know. And in those cases if it can't be *the* woman it's bound to be *a* woman."

Emily was in the mood to be completely resigned to giving up to another that which she did not want herself. She studied Miss Stanhope without prejudice against her and found her sweet but as yet colourless, a proper young person for Edgar to marry, one toward whom she could not possibly have felt the usual dog-in-the-manger jealousy. After dinner she sat near her and encouraged her in the bird-like chatter of the school girl. She was listened to with patience and tolerance; because she was young and fresh and delighted with everything including herself, amusingly, not offensively. She fell in love with Emily and timidly asked if she might come to see her.

"That would be delightful," said Emily with enthusiasm, falling through infection into a mode of speech and thought long outgrown. "I'm sure

we shall be great friends. Theresa will bring you on Saturday afternoon. That is my free day. You see, I'm a working-woman. I work every day except Saturday."

"Sundays too?" asked Evelyn.

"Oh, yes, I prefer"—she stopped short. "Sunday is a busy day with us," she said instead.

"Isn't that dreadful?"

"Yes—it is distressing." Without intention Emily put enough irony into her voice to make Evelyn look at her sharply. "It keeps me from church."

"Well, sometimes I think I'd like to be kept from church." Evelyn said this in a consolatory tone. "I'm a clergyman's daughter and I have to go often—to set a good example." She laughed. "Mamma is so nervous that she can only go occasionally and my brother Sam is a perfect heathen. But I often copy papa's sermons. He says he likes my large round hand as a change from the typewriting. Then I like to listen and see how many changes he makes. You'd be surprised how much better it all sounds when it's spoken—really quite new."

Papa! Papa's Sermons! And a Sam, probably as big as this great girl!

"Is your brother younger or older than you?"

"A year older. He's at college now—or at least, he's supposed to be. It's surprising how little he has to stay there. He's very gay—a little too wild, perhaps."

She was proud of Sam's wildness, full as proud as she was of her father's sermons. She rattled cheerfully on until it was time for her to go and, as Emily and she were putting on their wraps at the same time, she kissed her impulsively, blushing a little, saying "You're so beautiful. You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind?" Emily laughed and kissed her. Evelyn wondered why there were tears in the eyes of this fascinating woman with the musical voice and the expression like a goddess of liberty's.

* * * * * * * *

The next morning Dr. Stanhope, at breakfast and gloomy, brightened as his daughter came in and sat opposite him.

"I had such a glorious time at the Waylands'!" she said. "The dinner was lovely."

"Did Edgar take you in?"

"Oh, no." She blushed. "He wasn't there. He's in Stoughton, you know. But I met the most beautiful woman. She seemed so young, and yet she had such a wise, experienced look. And she was so unconscious how beautiful she was. You never saw such a sweet, pretty mouth! And her teeth were like—like——"

"Pearls," suggested her father. "They're always spoken of as pearls—when they're spoken of at all."

"No—because pearls are blue-white, whereas hers were *white*-white."

"But who was this lady with the teeth?"

"I didn't have a chance to ask—only her name.

She said she was a working-woman. She's a Miss Bromfield."

Stanhope dropped his knife and fork and looked at his daughter with an expression of horror.

"Why, what is it, father? Is there something wrong about her? It can't be. And I—I arranged to call on her!"

"No—no," he said hastily. "I was startled by a coincidence. She's a nice woman, nice in every way. But—did she ask you to call?"

"No—I asked her. But she was very friendly, and when I kissed her in the dressing-room she kissed me, and—she had such a queer, sad expression. I thought perhaps she had a sister like me who had died."

"Perhaps she had." Stanhope looked pensively at his daughter. To himself he said: "Yes, probably a twin sister—the herself of a few years ago."

"And I'm going to see her next Saturday," continued his daughter. "I'm sure Mrs. Wayland will take me."

"To see whom?" said Mrs. Stanhope, coming into the room.

Stanhope rose and drew out a chair for her. "We were talking of a Miss Bromfield whom Evelyn met at the Waylands' last night. You may remember—she came here one afternoon for the *Democrat*—about the church's work."

"I remember; she looked at me quite insolently, exactly as if I were an intruding servant. What was she doing at Wayland's? I'm surprised at

them. But why is Evelyn talking of going to see her? I'm astonished at you, Evelyn."

Evelyn and her father looked steadily at the table. Finally Evelyn spoke: "Oh, but you are quite mistaken, mother dear. She was a lady, really she was."

"Impossible," said Mrs. Stanhope. "She is a working girl. No doubt she's a poor relation of the Waylands."

Stanhope rose, walked to the window, and stood staring into the gardens. The veins in his forehead were swollen. And he seemed less the minister than ever, and more the incarnation of some vast, inchoate force, just now a force of dark fury. Gradually he whipped his temper down until he was standing over it, pale but in control.

"I wish to speak to your mother, Evelyn," he said in an even voice.

Evelyn left the room, closing the door behind her. Stanhope resumed his seat at the table. His wife looked at him, then into her plate, her lips nervous.

"Only this," he said. "You will let Evelyn go to see Miss Bromfield." His voice was polite, gentle. "And I must again beg of you not to express before our children those—those ideas of disrespect for labour and respect for idleness which, as you know, are more offensive to me than any others of the falsehoods which it is my life work to fight."

She was trembling with anger and fear. Yet in

her sullen eyes there was cringing adoration. One sees the same look in the eyes of a dog that is being beaten by its master, as it shows its teeth yet dares not utter a whine of its rage and pain lest it offend further.

"You know we never do agree about social distinctions, Arthur," she said, in a soothing tone.

"I know we agreed long ago not to discuss the matter," he replied, kindly but wearily. "And I know that we agreed that our children were not to hear a suggestion that their father was teaching false views."

"We can't all be as broad as you are, Arthur."

"If I were to speak what is on the tip of my tongue," he said good-humouredly, "we should reopen the sealed subject. I must go. They are waiting for me."

That afternoon Mrs. Stanhope wrote asking Theresa to go with Evelyn to Miss Bromfield's. And on Saturday Evelyn went, taking her mother's card.

CHAPTER XXII.

A PRECIPICE.

A WEEK after Evelyn's call, the hall boy brought Edgar Wayland's card to Emily. She was alone in the apartment, Joan having gone to the theatre with "her professor." She hesitated, looked an apology to her writing spread upon the table, then told the boy to show him up. He was dressed with unusual care even for him, and his face expressed the intensity of tragic determination of which the human countenance is capable only at or before twenty-eight.

"I've never seen your apartment." His glance was inspecting the room and the partly visible two rooms opening out of it. "It is so like you. How few people have any taste in getting together furniture and—and stuff,"

"When one has little to spend, one is more careful and thoughtful perhaps."

"That's the reason tenement flats are so tasteful." Edgar's face relaxed at his own humour, then with a self-rebuking frown resumed its former mournful inflexibility. "But I did not come here to talk about furniture. I came to talk about you and me. Emmy, was it final? Are you sure you won't—won't have me?"

Emily looked at him with indignant contempt, forgetting that Theresa had not said he was actually engaged to Evelyn. "I had begun to think you incapable of such—such baseness —now."

"Baseness? Don't, please. It isn't as bad as all that—only persistence. I simply can't give you up, it seems to me. And—I had to try one last time—because—the fact is, I'm about to ask another girl to marry me."

Emily showed her surprise, then remembered and looked relieved. "Why—I thought you had asked her. I must warn you that I know her, and far too good she is for you."

"You know her?"

"Yes—so let's talk no more about it. I'll forget what you said."

"Well, what of it?" Edgar rose and faced her. "You are thinking it dishonourable of me to come to you this way. But you wrong me. If she never saw me again, she'd forget me in a year—or less. So I tell you straight out that I'm marrying her because I can't get you. I'm desperate and lonesome and I want to have a home to go to."

"You couldn't possibly do better than marry Evelyn. I know her, Edgar. And I know, as only a woman can know another woman, how genuine she is."

"But"—Edgar's eyes had a look of pain that touched her. "I want you, Emmy. I always shall. A man wants the best. And you're the best—in looks, in brains, in every way. You'd

have everything and I'd never bother you. And you can stop this grind and be like other women—that is—I mean—you know—I don't mean anything against your work—only it is unnatural for a woman like you to have to work for a living."

Emily felt that she need not and must not take him seriously. She laughed at his embarrassment.

"You don't understand—and I can't make you understand. It isn't that I love work. I like to sit in the sunshine and be waited upon as well as any one. But——"

"And you *could* sit in the sunshine—or in the shade, Emmy."

"But—let me finish please. Whatever one gets that's worth while in this life one has to pay for. The price of freedom—to a woman just the same as a man—is work, hard work. And if it's natural for a woman to be a helpless for-sale, then it's the naturalness of so much else that's nature. And what are we here for except to improve upon nature?"

"Well, I don't know much about these theories. I hate them—they stand between you and me. And I want you so, Emmy! You'll be free. You know father and I both will do everything—anything for you and——"

Emily's cheeks flushed and there was impatience and scorn in her eyes and in the curve of her lips.

"You mean well, Edgar, but you must not talk

to me in that way. It makes me feel as if you thought I could be bought—as if you were bidding for me."

"I don't care what you call it," he said sullenly. "I'd rather have you as just a friend, but always near me than—there isn't any comparison."

"And I shall always be your friend, Edgar. You will get over this. Honestly now, isn't it more than half, nearly all, your hatred of being baffled? If I were throwing myself at you, as I once was, you'd fly from me. Six months after you've married Evelyn, you'll be thankful you did it. You'd not like a woman so full of caprices and surprises as I am. But I will not argue it."

"I wonder if you'll ever fall in love?" he said wistfully.

"I don't know, I'm sure. Probably I expect too much in a man. Again, I might care only for a man who was out of reach."

"You're too romantic, Emily, for this life. You forget that you're more or less human after all, and have to deal with human beings."

"I wish I could forget that I'm human." Emily sighed. Edgar looked at her suspiciously. "No" she went on. "I'm not happy either, Edgar. Oh, it takes so much courage to stand up for one's principles, one's ideas."

"But why do it? Why not accept what everybody says is so, and go along comfortably?"

"Why not? I often ask myself. But—well, I can't."

"Emmy, do you think it's right for me to marry Evelyn, feeling as I do?"

"Do *you*?" She answered this difficult question in morals by turning it on him, because she wished to escape the dilemma. How could she decide for another? Why should she judge what was right for Edgar, what best for Evelyn?

"Well—not unless I told her. Not too much, you know. But enough to——"

"You mustn't talk to me about Evelyn," Emily interrupted. "It's not fair to her. You compel me to seem to play the traitor to her. I must not know anything about your and her affairs."

There was a moment's silence, then she went on: "She is my friend, and, I hope, always shall be. It would pain me terribly if she should suspect; and it would be an unnecessary pain to her. A man ought never to tell a woman, or a woman a man, anything, no matter how true it is, if it's going to rankle on and on, long after it's ceased to be true. And your feeling for me isn't important even now. If you marry her, resolve to make her happy. And if you never create any clouds, there'll never be any for her—and soon won't be any for you."

He left her after a few minutes, and his last look—all around the room, then at her—was so genuinely unhappy that it saddened her for the evening. "Fate is preparing a revenge upon me," she thought dejectedly. "I can feel it coming. Why can't I, why won't I, put Arthur out of my mind?" And then she scoffed at herself unconvincingly for calling

Stanhope, Arthur, for permitting herself to be swept off her feet by the middle-aged husband of a middle-aged wife, the father of grown children. "How Evelyn would shrink from me if she knew—and yet——"

What kind of honour, justice, is it, she thought, that binds him to his wife, that holds us apart? With one brief life—with only a little part of that for intense enjoyment—and to sacrifice happiness, heaven, for a mere notion. "What does God care about us wretched little worms?" she said to herself. "Everywhere the law of the survival of the fittest—the best law after all, in spite of its cruelty. And *I* am the fittest for him. He belongs to me. He is mine. Why not?—Why can't I convince myself?"

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Evelyn asked Emily to go with her to the opera the following Saturday afternoon. They met in the Broadway lobby of the Metropolitan, and Emily at once saw that Evelyn was "engaged." She was radiant with triumph and modest importance. "You're the first one I've told outside the family. I haven't even written to Catherine Folsom—she's to be my maid of honour, you know. We promised each other at school."

"He will make you happy, I'm sure." Emily was amused at Evelyn's child-like excitement, yet there were tears near her eyes too. "What an infant she is," she was thinking, "and how unjust it is, how dangerous that she should have to get her experi-

ence of man after she has pledged herself not to profit by it."

"Oh, I'm sure I shall be," said Evelyn. "We'll have everything to make us happy. And I shall be free. I do *hate* being watched all the time and having to do just what mamma says."

"Yes, you will be very free," agreed Emily, commenting to herself: "What do these birds bred in captivity ever know about freedom? She has no idea that she's only being transferred to a larger cage where she'll find a companion whom she may or may not like. But—they're often happy, these caged birds. And I wonder if we wild birds ever are?"

Evelyn was prattling on. "He asked me in such a nice way and didn't frighten me. I'd been afraid he'd seize me—or—or something, when the time came. And he had such a sad, solemn look. He's so experienced! He hinted something about the past, but I hurried him away from that. Sam says men all have knowledge of the world, if they're any good. But I'm sure Edgar has always been a nice man."

"Don't bother about the past," said Emily. "The future will be quite enough to occupy you if you look after it properly."

The opera was La Bohème and Evelyn, busy with her great event, gave that lady and her sorrows little attention. "It's dreadfully unreal, isn't it?" she chattered. "Of course a man never could really care for a woman who had so little self-respect

as that, could he? I'm sure a real man, like Edgar, would never act in that way with a woman who wasn't married to him, could he?"

"I'm sure he'd despise all such women from the bottom of his heart," said Emily, looking amusedly at the "canary, discoursing from its cage-world of the great world outside which it probably will never see."

"I've had a lot of experience with that side of life," continued the "canary."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Emily in mock horror. "Do they lead double lives in the nursery nowadays?"

"Mamma kept us close, you know. We live in such a dreadful neighbourhood—down in Grand Street. I was usually at grandfather's up at Tarrytown when I wasn't in school. But I had to come home sometimes. And I used to peep into the streets from the windows, and then I'd see the most *awful* women going by. It made me really sick. It must be dreadful for a woman ever to forget herself."

"Dreadful," assented Emily, resisting with no difficulty the feeble temptation to try to broaden this narrow young mind. "It would take years," she thought, "to educate her. And then she probably wouldn't really understand, would only be tempted to lower herself."

The distinction between license and broad-mindedness was abysmal, Emily felt; but she also admitted—with reluctance—that the abyss was so

narrow that one might inadvertently step across it, if she were not an Emily Bromfield, and, even then, very, very watchful.

She was turning into the Park at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street a few evenings later, on her way home from the office, when Stanhope, driving rapidly downtown, saw her, stopped his cab, got out and dismissed it. She had been revolving a plan for resuming her self-respect and her peace of mind, how she would talk with him when she saw him, would compel him to aid her in—then she saw him coming; and her face, coloured high by the sharp wind, flushed a hotter crimson; and her resolve fled.

"May I walk through the Park with you?" he said abruptly; and without waiting for her to assent, he set out with her in the direction in which she had been going. In a huge, dark overcoat, that came to within a few inches of the ground, he looked more tremendous than ever. And as Emily walked beside him, the blood surged deliriously through her veins. "This is the man of all men," she thought. "And he loves me, loves *me*. And I was thinking that I must give him up. As if I could or would!"

"A man might have all the wealth in the world, and all the power, and all the adulation," his voice acted upon her nerves like the low notes of a violin, "and if he were a man—if he were a real human being—and did not have love——" He paused and looked at her. "Without it life is lonelier than the grave."

Emily was silent. She could see the grave, could hear the earth rattling down upon the coffin. Was he not stating the truth—a truth to shrink from?

He said: "I was born on a farm out West—the son of a man who was ruined in the East and went West to hide himself and to fancy he was trying to rebuild. He was sad and silent. And in that sad silence I grew up with books and nature for my companions. I longed to be a leader of men. I admired the great moral teachers of the past. I *felt* rather than understood religion—God, a world of woe, man working for his salvation through helping others to work out theirs. I cared nothing for theology—only for religion. I could feel—I never could reason; I cannot learn to reason. It isn't important how I worked my way upward. It isn't important how long the way or how painful. I went straight on, caring for nothing except the widest chances to help the march upward. You know what the parish downtown is—what the work is, how it has been built. But——" He paused, and when he spoke it was with an effort. "One by one I have lost my inspirations. And when I saw you there in Paris I saw as in a flash—it was like a miracle—what was the cause, why I was beaten in the very hour of victory."

Emily had ceased to fight against the emotions which surged higher and higher under the invocation of his presence and his voice.

"A man of my temperament may not work

alone," he went on. "He must have some one—a woman—beside him. And they together must keep the faith—the faith in the here and the now, the faith in mankind and in the journey upward through the darkness, the fog, the cold, up the precipices, with many a fall and many a fright, but always upward and onward."

He drew a long breath, and, looking down at her, saw her looking up at him, her eyes reflecting the glow of his enthusiasm.

"Yes," she said, "by myself I am nothing. But with another I could do much, for I, too, love the journey upward."

He stopped and caught both her hands in his. "I need you—need you," he said. They were standing at the turn of the path near the Mall, facing the broad, snow-draped lawns. "And I feel that you need me. I am no longer alone. Life has a meaning, a purpose."

"A purpose?" She drew her hands away and suddenly felt the cold and the sharp wind, and saw the tangled lines of the bare boughs, black and forbidding against the sunset sky. "What purpose? You forget."

"No, I remember!" He spoke defiantly. "I have been permitting that which is dead to cling to me and shut out sunlight and air and growth. But I shall permit it no longer. I *dare* not."

"No, *we* dare not," she said, dreamily. "You are right. The ghosts that wave us back are waving us not from, but to destruction. But—even if

it were not so, I'm afraid I'd say, ' Evil, be thou my good '."

" It is true—true of me also."

At the entrance to her house they parted, their eyes bright with visions of the future. As she went up in the elevator, her head began to ache as if she were coming from the delirium of an opium dream.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A "BETTER SELF."

EMILY went directly to her room. "Tell Miss Gresham not to wait," she said to the maid, "and please save only a very little for me." She slept two hours and awoke free from the headache, but low-spirited. Joan came into the dining-room to keep her company while she tried to eat, then they sat in the library-drawing-room before the fire. For the first time in years Emily felt that she needed advice, or, at least, needed to state her case aloud in hope of seeing it more clearly.

"You are not well this evening," Joan said presently. "Shall I read to you?"

"No, let us talk. Or, rather, please encourage me to talk about myself. I want to tell you something, and I don't know how to begin."

"Don't begin. I'm sure you'll regret it. Whenever I feel the confidential mood coming, I always put it off till to-morrow."

"Yes—but—there are times——"

"Do you wish me to approve something you've decided to do, or to dissuade you from doing something you would not do anyhow?' It's always one or the other."

"I'm not sure which it is."

Joan lit a cigarette and stretched herself among the cushions of the divan. "Well, what is it? Money?"

"No."

"Then it's not serious. Money troubles and poor health are about the only serious calamities."

"No—it's—Joan, I've been making an idiot of myself. I've lost my head over a married man." The words came with a rush.

"But you practically confessed all that the other day. And I told you then what I thought. Either get rid of him straight off, or steady your head and let him hang about until you are sick of him."

"But—you don't understand. Of course you couldn't. No one ever did understand another's case."

"I don't think it's that, my dear. When one is in love, he or she thinks it's a peculiar case. And the stronger his or her imagination, the more peculiar seems the case. But when it's submitted to an outsider, then it is looked at in the clear air, not in the fog of self-delusion. And how it does shrink!"

"I want him and he wants me," said Emily doggedly. "It may be commonplace and ridiculous, but it's the fact."

"Do you think it would last long enough to enable him to get a divorce? If so, he can do that. There's nothing easier nowadays than divorce. And what a dreadful blow to intrigue that has been! It doesn't leave either party a leg to stand on.

Just say to him: 'Yes, I love you. You say you love me. Go and get a divorce and then perhaps I'll marry you. But if not, you'll at least be free from daily contact with the wife you say or intimate that you loathe.' It's perfectly simple. The chances are you'll never see him again, and you can have a laugh at yourself, and can congratulate yourself on a narrow escape."

"Good advice, but it doesn't fit the case."

"Oh, you don't wish to marry him?"

"I never thought of it. But I'd rather not discuss the sentiment-side, please. Just the practical side."

"But there isn't any practical side. Why doesn't he get a divorce?"

"Because he's too conspicuous. There'd be an outcry against him. I don't believe he could get the divorce."

Emily was gazing miserably into the fire. Joan looked at her pityingly. "Oh," she said gently, dropping the tone of banter. "Yes—that might be."

"And it seems to me that I can't give him up."

"But why do you debate it? Why not follow where your instinct leads?"

"That's just it—where *does* my instinct lead? If—the—the circumstances—I can't explain them to you—were different with him about—about his family, I'd probably reason that I was not robbing any one and would try to—to be happy. But——"

She halted altogether and, when she continued, her voice was low and she was looking at her friend,

pleadingly yet proudly: "You may be right. We may be deceiving ourselves. But I do not think so, Joan. I believe—and you do too, don't you?—that there can be high thoughts in common between a man and a woman. I'm sure they can care in such a way that passion becomes like the fire, fusing two metals into one stronger and better than either by itself. And I think—I feel—yes, it seems to me I *know*, that it is so with us. Oh, Joan, he and I need each the other."

Joan threw away her cigarette and rested her head upon her arms, so that her face was concealed from Emily. She murmured something.

"What do you say, Joan?"

"Nothing—only—I see the same old, the eternal illusion. And what a fascinating tenacious illusion it is, Emmy dear. We no sooner banish it in one form than it reappears in another."

"But—tell me, Joan—what shall I do?"

"I, advise you? No, my dear. I cannot. I'd have to know you better than you know yourself to give you advice. You have grown into a certain sort of woman, with certain ideas of what you may and what you may not do. In this crisis you'll follow the path into which your whole past compels you. And while I don't know you well enough to give you advice, I do know you well enough to feel sure that you'll do what is just and honourable. If that means renunciation, you will renounce him. If it means defiance, you will defy. If it means a compromise, why—I don't think you'll make it,

Emily, unless you can carry your secret and still feel that the look of no human being could make you flinch."

"Will I?" Emily's voice was dreary and doubtful. "But, when one is starving, he doesn't look at the Ten Commandments before seizing the bread that offers."

"Not at the Ten Commandments—no. But at the one—'Thou shalt not kill thy self-respect.' And don't forget, dear, that if you aren't valuable to the world *without* love, you'll be worth very little to it *with* love."

"Joan's Professor" came, and Emily went away to bed.

* * * * * * *

On her "lazy day" she went into the Park and seated herself under an elm high among the rocks. Several squirrels were playing about her and a fat robin was hopping round and round in a wide circle, pretending to be interested only in the food supply but really watching her. The path leading to her retreat turned abruptly just before reaching it, then turned again for the descent. She did not hear a footstep but, looking up as she was shifting her glance from one page of her novel to the next, she saw a child before her—a tall child with slim legs and arms, and a body that looked thin but strong under a white dress. She had a pink ribbon at her throat. Her hair was almost golden and waved defiantly around and away from a large pink bow. Her eyes were large and gray and solemn. But at

each corner of her small mouth there was a fun-loving line which betrayed possibilities of mischief and appreciation of mischief. This suggestion was confirmed by her tilted nose.

Emily smiled at this vision criss-crossed with patches of sun and shadow. But the vision did not smile in return.

"Good morning, Princess Pink-and-white," said Emily. "Did you come down out of the sky?"

"No," answered the child, drawing a little nearer. "And my name is not—not that, but Mary. Do you live here?"

"Yes—this is my home," answered Emily. "I'm the big sister of the squirrels and a cousin to the robins."

The child looked at her carefully, then at the squirrels and then at the robin. "You are not truthful," she said, her large eyes gazing straight into Emily's. "My uncle says that it is dishon'able not to tell the truth."

"Even in fun, while you are trying to make friends with Mary, Princess Pink-and-white?" Emily said this with the appearance of anxiety.

"It's bad not to always tell the truth to young people." She came still nearer and stood straight and serious, her hands behind her. "My uncle says they ought to hear and say only what is true."

"Well then—what does he tell you about fairies?"

"He doesn't tell me about them. Mamma says there are fairies, but he says he has never seen any.

He says when I am older I can find out for myself."

"And what do the other children say?"

"I don't know. There aren't any other children. There's just uncle and mamma and nurse. And when mamma is ill, I go to stay with nurse. And I only go out with uncle or mamma."

"That is very nice," said Emily, taking one of the small, slender hands and kissing it. But in reality she thought it was the reverse of nice, and very lonely and sad.

"I was going away across the ocean where there are lots of children waiting to play with me. But mamma—she hadn't been sick for a long, long time—most two years, I think—and then she was sick again and I'm not to go. But I'm not sorry."

"Why?"

"I'm a great comfort to uncle, and he wasn't going along. And I'm glad to stay with him. He says I'm a great comfort to him. I sing to him when he is feeling bad. Would you like for me to sing to you? You look as if you felt bad."

Emily did feel like tears. It was not what the child said, but her air of aloneness, of ignorance of the pleasures of childhood and its companionships. She seemed never to have been a child and at the same time to be far too much a child for her years —apparently the result of an attempt by grown persons to bring her up in a dignified way without destroying the innocence of infancy.

"Yes, I should like to hear you sing," said Emily.

The child sat, folded her hands in her lap and began to sing in French—a slow, religious chant, low and with an intonation of ironic humour. As Emily heard the words, she looked at "Princess Pink-and-White" in amazement. It was a concert-hall song, such as is rarely heard outside the cafés chantants of the boulevards—a piece of subtle mockery with a double meaning. The child sang it through, then looked at her for approval.

"It's in French," was all Emily could say, and the child with quick intuition saw that something was wrong.

"You don't like it," she said, offended.

"You sing beautifully," replied Emily. She wished to ask her where she had got the song, but felt that it would be prying.

"Mamma taught it me the last time she was being taken ill. It was hard to learn because I do not speak French. I had to go over it three times. She said I wasn't to sing it to uncle. But I thought *you* might like it."

"No, I shouldn't sing it to uncle, if I were you," said Emily.

Just then the child rose and her face lighted up. Emily followed her glance and saw Stilson at the turn of the path, standing like a statue. He was looking not at the child, but at her. The child ran toward him and he put his hand at her neck and drew her close to him.

"Why, how d'ye do, Mr. Stilson," said Emily. cordially. "This is the first time I've seen you since I was leaving for Paris. As soon as I came back I asked for you, but you were on vacation. And I thought you were still away."

Stilson advanced reluctantly, a queer light in his keen, dark-gray eyes. He shook hands and seated himself. Mary occupied the vacant space on the bench between him and Emily, spreading out her skirts carefully so that they should not be mussed. "I am still idling," said Stilson. "I hate hotels and I loathe mosquitoes. Besides, I think if I ever got beyond the walls of this prison I'd run away and never return."

"So you too grow tired of your work?" said Emily. "Yet you are editor-in-chief now, and—Oh, I should think it would be fascinating."

"It would have been a few years ago. But everything comes late, One has worked so hard for it that one is too exhausted to enjoy it. And it means work and care—always more and more work and care. But, pardon me. I'm in one of my depressed moods. And I didn't expect any one—you—to surprise me in it."

Emily looked at him, her eyes giving, and demanding, sympathy. "I often wish that life would offer something worth having, not as a free gift—I shouldn't ask that, and not at a bargain even, but just at a fair price."

"I'm surprised to find such parsimony in one so young—it's unnatural." Stilson's expression and

tone were good-humoured cynicism. "Why, at your age, with your wealth—youth is always rich—you ought never to look at or think of price marks."

"But I can't help it. I come from New England."

"Ah! Then it's stranger still. With the aid of a New England conscience you ought to cheat life out of the price."

"I do try, but—" Emily sighed—"I'm always caught and made pay the more heavily."

Stilson studied her curiously. He was smiling with some mockery as he said. "You must be cursed with a sense of duty. That sticks to one closer than his shadow. The shadow leaves with the sunshine. But duty is there, daylight or dark."

"Especially dark," said Emily. "What a slavery it is! To tramp the dusty, stony highway close beside gardens that are open and inviting; and not to be able to enter."

His strong, handsome face became almost stern. "I don't agree with you. Suppose that you entered the gardens, would they seem good if you looked back and saw your better self lying dead in the dust?" He seemed to be talking to himself not to her.

"But don't you ever wish to be free?" she asked.

"I *am* free—absolutely free," he said proudly. "One does not become free by license, by cringing before the stupidest, the most foolish impulses there are in him. I think he becomes free by refusing

to degrade himself and violate the law of his own nature."

"But—What is stupid and what isn't?"

"No one could answer that in a general way. All I can say is—" Stilson seemed to her to be looking her through and through. "Did you ever have any doubt in any particular case?"

Emily hesitated, her eyes shifting, a faint flush rising to her cheeks. "Yes," she said.

"Then that very doubt told you what was foolish and what intelligent. Didn't it?"

Stilson was not looking at her now and she studied his face—mature yet young, haughty yet kind. Strong passions, good and bad, had evidently contended, were still contending, behind that interesting mask.

"No," he went on, "if ever you make up your mind to do wrong,"—His voice was very gentle and seemed to her to have an undercurrent of personal appeal in it—"don't lie to yourself. Just look at the temptation frankly, and at the price. And, if you will or must, why, pay and make off with your paste diamonds or gold brick or whatever little luxury of that kind you've gone into Mr. License's shop to buy. What is the use of lying to one's self? We are poor creatures indeed, it seems to me, if there isn't at least one person whom we dare face with the honest truth."

Emily had always had a profound respect for Stilson. She knew his abilities; and, while Marlowe had usually praised his friend with discreet reserva-

tions, she had come to know that Marlowe regarded him as little, if at all, short of a genius in his power of leading and directing men. As he talked to her, restating the familiar fundamentals of practical morals, she felt a strong force at work upon her. Like Stanhope he impressed her with his great personal power; but wholly unlike him, Stilson seemed to be using that power to an end which attracted her without setting the alarm bells of reason and prudence to ringing.

"I'm rather surprised to find you so conventional," said Emily, by way of resenting the effect he and his "sermon" were having upon her.

"Conventional?" Stilson lifted his eyebrows and gave her an amused, satirical look. "Am I? Then the world must have changed suddenly. No, I wasn't pleading for any particular code of conduct. Make up your code to suit yourself. All I venture to insist is that you must live up to your own code, whatever it is. Be a law unto yourself; but, when you have been, don't become a law breaker."

"Do you think mamma will be well enough for me to go home to-morrow?" It was the little girl, weary of being unnoticed and bursting into the conversation.

Stilson started as if he had forgotten that she was there. "Perhaps—yes—dear," he said and rose at once. "We must be going."

"Good-bye," said Mary. Emily took her hand and kissed it. But the child, with a quaint mingling of shyness and determination, put up her face

to be kissed, and adjusted her lips to show where she wished the kiss to be placed. "Good-bye," she repeated. "I know who you are now. You are the Violet Lady Uncle Robert puts in the stories he tells me."

"Come, Mary," said Stilson severely. And he lifted his hat, but not his eyes, and bowed very formally.

Emily sat staring absently at the point at which they had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TO THE TEST.

STANHOPE plodded dully through his routine—listening to reports, directing his assistants, arranging services in the church and chapels, dictating letters. A score of annoying details were thrust at him for discussion and settlement—details with which helpers with a spark of initiative would never have bothered him. His wife, out of temper, came to nag him about expenditures. His son wrote from college for an extra allowance, alleging a necessity which his father at once knew was mythical. Another letter was from a rich parishioner, taking him to task for last Sunday's sermon as "socialistic, anarchistic in its tendency, and of the sort which makes it increasingly difficult for conservative men of property to support your church." At luncheon there were two women friends of his wife and they sickened him with silly compliments, shot poisoned arrows at the reputations of their friends, and talked patronisingly of their "worthy poor." After luncheon—more of the morning's routine, made detestable by the self-complacent vanity of one of his stupidest curates and by the attempts of the homeliest deaconess to flirt with him under the mask

of seeking "spiritual counsel." And finally, when his nerves were unstrung, a demand from a tedious old woman that he come to her bedside immediately as she was dying—demands of that kind his sense of duty forbade him to deny.

"This is the third time within the month," he said peevishly. "Before, she was simply hysterical." And he scowled at Schaffer, the helper to the delicatessen merchant in the basement of the tenement where the old woman lived.

"I think maybe there's a little something in it this time," ventured Schaffer, his tone expressing far less doubt than his words.

"I'll follow you in a few minutes," said Stanhope, adding to himself, "and I'll soon be out of all this."

He did not know how or when—"after Evelyn is married," he thought vaguely—but he felt that he was practically gone. He would leave his wife all the property; and he and Emily would go away somehow and somewhere and begin life—not anew, but actually begin. "I shall be myself at last," he thought, "speaking the truth, earning my living in the sweat of my face, instead of in the sweat of my soul." As he came out of the house he looked up at the church—the enormous steepled mass of masonry, tapering heavenward. "Pointing to empty space," he thought, "tricking the thoughts of men away from the street and the soil where their brothers are. Yes, I shall no longer court the rich to get money for the poor. I shall no longer fling the dust of dead beliefs into the eyes of the

poor to blind them to injustice." He strode along, chin up, eyes only for his dreams. He did not note the eager and respectful bows of the people in the doorways, block after block. He did not note that between the curtains of the dives, where painted women lay in wait for a chance to leer and lure, forms shrank back and faces softened as he passed.

Into the miserable Orchard street tenement; through the darkness of the passageway; into a mouldy court, damp and foul even in that winter weather; up four ill-smelling stairways with wall paper and plastering impatient for summer that they might begin to sweat and rot and fall again; in at a low door—the entrance to a filthy, unaired den where only the human animal of all the animal kingdom could long exist.

The stove was red-hot and two women in tattered, grease-bedaubed calico were sitting at it. They were young in years, but their abused and neglected bodies were already worn out. One held a child with mattered eyes and sores hideously revealed through its thin hair. The other was about to bring into the world a being to fight its way up with the rats and the swarming roaches.

In the corner was a bed which had begun its career well up in the social scale and had slowly descended until it was now more than ready for the kindling-box. Upon it lay a heap of rags swathing the skeleton of what had once been a woman, Her head was almost bald. Its few silver-white hairs were tied tightly into a nut-like knot by a rusty

black string. Her skin, pale yellow and speckled with dull red blotches, was drawn directly over the bones and cartilages of her skull and face, and was cracked into a network of seams and wrinkles. The shapeless infoldings of her mouth were sunk deep in the hollow between nose and chin. Her hands, laid upon the covers at which her fingers picked feebly, had withered to bones and bunches of cords thrust into two ill-fitting gloves of worn-out parchment.

As Stanhope entered, the women at the stove rose, showed their worse than toothless gums in a momentary smile, then resumed the doleful look which is humanity's universal counterfeit for use at death-beds. They awkwardly withdrew and the old woman opened her eyes—large eyes, faded and dim but, with the well-shaped ears close against her head, the sole reminders of the comeliness that had been.

She turned her eyes toward the broken-backed chair at the head of her bed. He sat and leaning over put his hand—big and strong and vital—upon one of her hands.

"What can I do, Aunt Albertina?" he said.

"I'm leaving, Doctor Stanhope." There was a trace of a German accent in that hardly human croak.

"Well, Aunt Albertina, you are ready to go or ready to stay. There is nothing to fear either way."

"Look in that box behind you—there. The letters. Yes." He sat again, holding in his hand a

package of letters, yellow where they were not black. "Destroy them." The old woman was looking at them longingly. Then she closed her eyes and tried to lift her head. "Under the pillow," she muttered. "Take it out." He reached under the slimy pillow and drew forth a battered embossed-leather case. "Look," she said.

He opened it. On the one side was the picture of a man in an officer's uniform with decorations across his breast—a handsome man, haughty-looking, cruel-looking. On the other side was the picture of a woman—a round, weak, pretty face, a mouth longing for kisses, sentimental eyes, a great deal of fair hair, graceful, rounded shoulders.

"That was I," croaked the old woman. He looked at that head in the bed, that face, that neck with the tendons and bones outstanding and making darker-brown gullies between.

"Yes—I," she said, "and not thirty years ago."

She closed her eyes and her fingers picked at the covers. "Do you remember," she began again—"the day you first saw me?"

He recalled it. She was wandering along the gutter of Essex Street, mumbling to herself, stooping now and then to pick up a cigar butt, a bit of paper, a rag, and slip it into a sack.

"Yes, Aunt Albertina—I remember."

"You stopped and shook hands with me and asked me to come to a meeting, and gave me a card. I never came. I was too busy—too busy drinking myself to death." She paused and mut-

tered, in German, "Ach, Gott, I thought I would never accomplish it. But at last—" Then she went on in English, "But I remembered you. I asked about you. They all knew you. 'The giant' they call you. You are so strong. They lean on you—all these people. You do not know them or see them or feel them, but they lean on you."

"But I am weak, Aunt Albertina. I am a giant with a pigmy soul—a little soul."

"Yes, I know what pigmy means." The wrinkles swirled and crackled in what was meant to be a smile. "I had a 'von' in my name in Germany, and perhaps something before it—but no matter. Yes, you are weak. So was he—the man in the picture—and I also. We tempted each other. He left his post, his wife, all. We came to America. He died. I was outcast. I danced in a music-hall —what did I care what became of me when he was gone? Then I sat at the little tables with the men, and learned what a good friend drink is. And so—down, down, down——" she paused to shut her eyes and pick at the covers.

"But," she went on, "drink always with me as my friend to make me forget, to make me content wherever I was—the gutter, the station-house, the dance-hall. If *he* could have seen me among the sailors, tossing me round, tearing at my clothes, putting quarters in my stockings—for drinks afterwards—drinks!"

There was a squirming among the rags where her old bones were hidden. Stanhope shuddered and

the sweat stood in beads on his white face. "But that is over, and you've repented long ago," he said hurriedly, eager to get away.

"Repent?" The old woman looked at him with jeering smile. "Not I! Why? With drink one thing's as good as another, one bed as another, one man as another. The idealissmus soon passes. Ach, how we used to talk of our souls—Gunther and I. Souls! Yes, we were made for each other. But—he died, and life must be lived. Yes, I know what pigmy means. I had a von in my name over there and something in front. But no soul—just a body."

"What else can I do for you, Aunt Albertina?" He spoke loudly as her mind was evidently wandering.

"Be strong. They lean on you. No, I mean I lean on you. The letters and the pictures—destroy them. Yes, Gunther and I had von in our names —but no soul—just youth and love——"

He went to the stove, lifted the lid, and tossed in the letters and the old case. As he was putting the lid on again he could see the case shrivelling, and the flame with its black base crawling over sheets closely written in a clear, beautiful foreign handwriting.

"They are destroyed, Aunt Albertina. Is that all?"

"All. No religion—not to-day, I thank you. Yes, you are strong—but no soul, only a body."

He went out and sent the two women. He ex-

panded his lungs to the tainted air of Orchard Street. It seemed fresh and pure to him. "Horrible!" he thought, "I shall soon be out of all this——"

Out of it? He stopped short in the street and looked wildly around. Out of *it*? Out of what?—out of life? If not, how could he escape responsibility, and consequences? Consequences! He strode along, the children toddling or crawling swiftly aside to escape his tread. And as he strode the word "Consequences!" clanged and banged against the walls of his brain like the clapper of a mighty bell.

At the steps of his house a woman and a man tried to halt him. He brushed them aside, went up the steps two at a time, let himself in, and shut himself in his study.

Why had he not seen it before? To shiver with the lightning of lust the great tree of the church, the shelter and hope of these people; to tempt fate to vengeance not upon himself, but upon Emily; to cover his children with shame; to come to her, a wreck, a ruin; to hang a millstone about her neck and bid her swim!—"And I called this—love!"

* * * * * * *

At eight o'clock that evening Emily sat waiting for him. "Shall I hate him as soon as I see him? Or shall I love him so that I'll not care for shame or sin?" The bell rang and she started up, trembling. The maid was already at the front door.

"Nancy!" she called; then stood rigid and cold,

holding the portière with one hand and averting her face.

"Yes, mum."

"If it is any one for me——"

She hesitated again. She could see herself in the long mirror between the windows. She drew herself up and sent a smile, half-triumphant, half-derisive, at her image, "Say I'm not at home," she ended.

The door opened, there was a pause, then it closed. Nancy entered, "Only a note, mum." She held it out and Emily took it—Stanhope's writing. She tore it open and read:

"I have a presentiment that you, too, have seen the truth. We may not go the journey together. I have come to my senses. If it was love that we offered each the other, then we do well to strangle the monster before it strangles us, and tramples into the mire all that each of us has done for good thus far.

I—and you, too—feel like one who dreams that he is about to seize delight and awakens to find that he was leaping from a window to destruction,

This is not renunciation. It is salvation.

Evelyn tells me she is to see you to-morrow. I am glad that you and my daughter are friends.

She read the note again, and, after a long interval, a third time. Then she bent slowly and laid it upon the coals. She sat in a low chair, watched the paper curl into a tremulous ash, which presently drifted up the chimney. She was not conscious that there was any thought in her mind. She was conscious only of an enormous physical and mental relief.

"I must go to bed," she said aloud. She hardly touched the pillow before she was sound asleep—the sleep of exhaustion, of content, of the battle won. After several hours she awakened. "I'm so glad my 'better self' told Nancy to say I wasn't at home," she thought. "That makes me know that I was—what was I?" But before she could answer she was again asleep.

The next morning Joan at breakfast suddenly lifted her eyes from her newspaper and her coffee, listened and smiled. Emily was singing at her bath.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. GAMMELL PRESUMES.

MR. WAKEMAN, under whom she had been working comfortably, was now displaced by a Mr. Gammell, whom she had barely seen and of whom she had heard alarming tales. He had been made City Editor when Stilson was promoted. Tireless and far-sighted and insatiable as a news-gatherer, he drove those under him "as if eating and sleeping had been abolished," one of them complained. Bnt he made the *Democrat's* local news the best in New York, and this gradually impressed the public and raised the circulation. Gammell was a sensationalist—" the yellowest yet," the reporters called him—and Stilson despised him. But Stilson was too capable a journalist not to appreciate his value. He encouraged him and watched him closely, taking care to keep from print the daily examples of his reckless " overzeal."

As the Sunday edition ought to be the most profitable issue of a big newspaper, the proprietors decided to transfer Gammell to it, after cautioning him to remember Stilson's training and do nothing to destroy the " character " of the paper. Gammell began with a " shake-up " of his assistants. Emily, just returned from a midsummer vacation, was

opening her desk, when another woman of the Sunday staff, Miss Venable, whom she had never seen at the office thus early before, began to tell her the dire news. "He's good-looking and polite," she said, "but he has no respect for feelings and no consideration about the quantity of work. He treats us as if we were so many machines."

"That isn't strange or startling, is it?" said Emily indifferently. "He's like most successful men. I always feared Mr. Wakeman was too easy-going, too good to last. I'm surprised that there hasn't been a change before."

"Just wait till you've had an experience with him. He told me—he called me in this morning and said with a polite grin—what a horrid grin he has!—that he was pained that I did not like my position on the Sunday staff. And when I protested that I did, he said, 'It's good of you to say so, Miss Venable, but your work tells a truth which you are too considerate of me to speak.' And then he went on to show that he has been sneaking and spying on me about reading novels in office hours and staying out too long at lunch time. Think of that!"

"He may be watching you now," suggested Emily.

"No—he's—good gracious, there he is!" and she fled to her desk.

Emily looked round and saw a notably slender, pale man of middle height with the stoop of a student and restless, light-brown eyes. He was

walking rapidly, glancing from side to side and nervously swinging his keys by their chain. He stopped at her desk and smiled—agreeably Emily thought.

"Miss Bromfield?" he said.

"Yes. And you are Mr. Gammell?"

"I am that brute—that ogre—that Simon Legree," he replied, with a satirical smile which barely altered the line of his thin, pale lips under his small moustache. "Will you come into my office, please—at your leisure?" Emily thought she had never heard a polite phrase sound so cynically hollow.

She rose and followed him. He began at once and talked swiftly, now cutting up sheets of blank paper with a huge pair of shears, now snapping the fingers of one hand against the knuckles of the other, now twitching his eyes, now ruffling and smoothing his hair. He showed that he had gone through her work for several months past and that he knew both her strong points and her defects. He gave her a clear conception first of what he did not want, then of what he did want.

As they talked she became uncomfortable. She admired his ability, but she began to dislike his personality. And she soon understood why. He was showing more and more interest in her personal appearance and less and less interest in her work. Like all good-looking women, Emily was too used to the sort of glances he was giving her to feel or pretend to feel deep resentment. But it made her

uneasy to reflect on what those glances from a man in his position and of his audacity portended. "I shall have trouble with him," she was thinking, before they had been together half an hour. And she became formal and studied in her courtesy. But this seemed to have not this slightest effect upon him.

"However," he said in conclusion, "don't take what I've been saying too seriously. You may do as you please. I'm sure I'll like whatever you do. And if you feel that you have too much work, just tell me and I'll turn it over to someone who was made to drudge."

He was at her desk several times during the day. The last time he brought a bundle of German and French illustrated papers and pointed out to her in one of them a doubtful picture and the still more doubtful jest printed underneath. He watched her closely. She looked and read without a change of colour or expression. "I don't think we would reprint it," she said indifferently, turning the page.

As he walked away she had an internal shudder of repulsion. "How crude he is!" she thought. "He has evidently been well educated and well bred. Yet he can't distinguish among people. He thinks they're all cut from the same pattern, each for some special use of his. Yes, I shall have trouble with him—and that soon."

He hung about her desk, passing and repassing, often pausing and getting as near as possible to her, compelling her pointedly to move. She soon had

his character from his own lips. She was discussing with him a "human interest" story from a Colorado paper—about love and self-sacrifice in a lone miner's hut far away among the mountains. "That will catch the crowd," he said. "We'll spread it for a page with a big, strong picture."

"Yes, it's a beautiful story," said she. "No one could fail to be touched by it."

"It's easy to make the mob weep," he answered with a sneer. "What fools they are! As if there was anything in that sort of slush."

Emily was simply listening, was not even looking comment.

"I don't suppose that anybody ever unselfishly cared for anybody else since the world began," he went on. "It's always vanity and self-interest. The difference between the mob and the intelligent few is that the mob is hypocritical and timid, while intelligent people frankly reach out for what they want."

"Your scheme of life has at least the merit of directness," said Emily, turning away to go to her desk.

On the plea that he wished to discuss work with her he practically compelled her to dine with him two or three times a week. While his lips were busy with adroit praises of her ability his eyes were appealing to her vanity as a woman—and he was not so unskilful at that mode of attack as he had seemed at first. He exploited her articles in the Sunday magazine, touching them up himself

and—as she could not but see—greatly improving them. He asked Stilson to raise her salary, and it was done.

She did not discourage him. She was passive, maintaining her business-like manner. But after leaving him she always had a feeling of depression and self-disapproval. She liked the display of her work, she liked the sense of professional importance which he gave her, she did not dislike his flatteries. She tried to force herself to look at the truth, to see that all he said and did arose from the basest of motives, unredeemed by a single trace of an adornment of sentiment, But, though she pretended to herself that she understood him perfectly, her vanity was insidiously aiding her strong sense of the politic to draw her on. "What can I do?" she pleaded to herself. "I must earn my living. I must assume, as long as I possibly can, that everything is all right."

While she was thus drifting, helpless to act and desperately trying to hope that a crisis was not coming, she met Stilson one morning in the entrance-hall of the *Democrat* Building. As always, his sombre expression lighted and he stopped her.

"How are you getting on with Gammell?" he asked, in his voice that exactly suited the resolute set of his jaw and the aggressive forward thrust of his well-shaped head.

At Gammell's name she became embarrassed, almost ashamed. No one knew better than she what a powerful effect Stilson had upon sensitive people

in making them guiltily self-conscious if there was reason for it. She could not help dropping her eyes, and her confusion was not decreased by the fear that he would misconstrue her manner into a confession worse than the truth. But she was showing less of her mind than she thought.

"Oh—splendidly," she replied. "I like him much better than at first. He makes us work and that has been well for me."

"Um—yes." He looked relieved. "And I think it excellent work. Good morning."

Emily gazed after his tall strong figure with the expression that is particularly good to see in eyes that are looking unobserved at another's back. "He knows Gammell," she thought, "and had an idea he might be annoying me. He wished to give me a chance to show that I needed aid, if I did. What a strange man—and how much of a man!"

When she saw Gammell half an hour later, she unconsciously brought herself up sharply. She was as distant as the circumstances of their business relations permitted. But Gammell, deceived by her former tolerance and by his vanity and his hopes, thought she was practising another form of coquetry upon him. As she retreated, he pursued. The first time they were alone, he put his arm about her and kissed her.

Emily had heard that women working in offices with men invariably have some such experience as this sooner or later. And now, here she was, face to face with the choice between self-respect and the

enmity of the man who could do her the most harm in the most serious way—her living. And in fairness she admitted, perhaps more generously than Gammell deserved, that she was herself in part responsible for his conduct.

She straightened up—they were bending over several drawings spread upon a table—and stiffened herself. She looked at him with a cold and calm dignity that made him feel as futile and foolish as if he had found himself embracing a marble statue. Anger he could have combated. Appeal he would have disregarded. But this frozen tranquillity made him drop his arm from her waist and begin confusedly to handle the drawings. Emily's heart beat wildly, and she strove in vain to control herself so that she could begin to talk of the work in hand as if his attempt had not been. His nervousness changed to anger. Instead of letting the matter drop, he said sneeringly: "Oh, you needn't pretend. You understood perfectly all along. You were willing to use me. And now——"

"Please don't!" Emily's voice was choked. She had an overpowering sense of degradation. "It is my fault, I admit. I did understand in a way. But I tried to make myself believe that we were just friends, like two men."

"What trash!" said Gammell contemptuously. "You never believed it for an instant. You knew that there never was, and never will be, a friendship between a young man and a young woman unless each is thoroughly unattractive to the other."

He was plucking up courage and Emily saw that he was mentally arranging a future renewal of his attempt. "I must settle it now, once for all, at any cost," she said to herself, with the resoluteness that had never failed her in crises. Then aloud, to him: "At any rate, we understand each the other now. You know that I have not the faintest interest in your plan for mixing sentiment and business." Her look and tone were convincing as they cut deep into his vanity. She turned to the drawings and resumed the discussion of them. In a very few minutes he left her. "He hates me," she thought, "and I can't blame him. I wonder what he'll do to revenge himself?"

But he gave no sign. When they met again and thereafter he treated her with exaggerated courtesy and no longer annoyed her. "He's self-absorbed," she concluded, "and too cool-headed to waste time and energy in revenges."

But when her articles were no longer displayed, were on the contrary "cut" or altogether "side-tracked," she began to think that probably the pinched-in look of his mouth and nose and at the back of his neck did not belie him. She felt an ominous, elusive insecurity. She debated asking Stilson to transfer her to some other department.

But she hesitated to go to Stilson. For she now knew the whole secret of his looks and actions, of which she had been thinking curiously ever since the morning of their chance meeting in the Park.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRUTH ABOUT A ROMANCE.

ONE half of that mystery had been betrayed by little Mary. The other half she might have known long before had she not held aloof from her fellow workers, except the few who did not gossip.

* * * * * * * *

He was a Virginian. He had been brought up on a farm—an only son, carefully sheltered, tutored by his father and mother. He had gone up to Princeton, religious and reverential of the most rigid code of personal morals. His studies in science and philosophy had taken away his creed. But he the more firmly anchored himself to his moral code—not because he was prim or feeble or timid, but because to him his morality was his self respect.

He graduated from Princeton at twenty and became a reporter on *The World.* He was released to New York—young, hot-blooded, romantic, daring. He rose rapidly and was not laughed at for his idealism and his Puritanism, partly because he was able, chiefly because he had that arrogant temperament which enforces respect from the irresolute, submissive majority.

One night, a few weeks before he was twenty-one, he went with Harry Penrose of the *Herald* to the opening of the season at the Gold and Glory. It was then in the beginning of its fame as the best music-hall in the country if not in the world. As they entered, the orchestra was playing one of those dashing melodies that seem to make the blood flow in their rhythm. The stage was thronged with a typical Gold and Glory chorus—tall, handsome young women with long, slender arms and legs. They were dancing madly, their eyes sparkling, their hair waving, the straps slipping from their young shoulders, their slim legs in heliotrope silk marking the time of the music with sinuous strokes from the stage to high above their heads and down again. Against this background of youth and joy and colour two girls were leading the dance. One of them was round and sensuous ; the other thin with the pleasing angularity of a girl not yet a woman grown.

Instantly Stilson's eyes were for her. He felt that he had never even imagined such grace. The others were smiling gaily, boldly, into the audience in teasing mock-invitation. Her lips were closed. Her smile was dreamy, her soul apparently wrapped in the delirium of the dance. Her whole body was in constant motion. It seemed to Stilson that at every movement of shoulders or hips, of small round arms or tapering legs, at every swing of that little head crowned with glittering waves of golden light, a mysterious, thrilling energy was flung out

from her like an electric current. He who had not cared for women of the stage watched this girl as a child at its first circus watches the lady in tights and tarlatan. When the curtain went down, he felt that the lights were being turned off instead of on.

"Who is she?" he asked Penrose.

"Who?" said Penrose, looking at the women near by in the orchestra chairs. "Which one?"

"The girl at the end—the right end—on the stage, I mean."

"Oh—Marguerite Feronia. Isn't she a wonder? I don't see how any one can compare her with Jennie Jessop, who danced opposite her."

"Do you know—Miss Feronia?" asked Stilson.

"Marguerite? Yes. I've seen her a few times in the cork-room. Ever been there?"

"No." Stilson had neither time nor inclination for dissipation.

"Would you like to go? It's an odd sort of place."

They went downstairs, through the public bar and lounge and into a long passage. At the end Penrose knocked on a door with a small shutter in it. Up went the shutter and in its stead there was a fierce face—low forehead, stubby, close cropped hair, huge, sweeping moustache shading a bull-dog jaw. The eyes were wicked yet not unkindly.

"Hello, John. This is a friend of mine from the *World*—Mr. Stilson."

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Penrose." The shutter replaced the face and the door opened. They were

under the stage, in a room walled and ceilinged with champagne corks and broken into many alcoves and compartments. They sat at a table in one of the alcoves and Penrose ordered a bottle of champagne. When the waiter brought it he invited "John" to have a glass. "John" took it standing —"Your health, gents—best regards"—a gulp, the glass was empty and the moustache had a deep, damp fringe.

"I have orders not to let nobody in till the end of the performance," said "John." "But you gents of the press is different." He winked as if his remark were a witticism.

"May I see Marguerite for a minute?"

"She's got to change," said "John" doubtfully, "and she comes on about five minutes after the curtain goes up. But I'll see."

He went through a door at the far end of the "cork-room" and soon reappeared with Marguerite close behind him. She was in a yellow and red costume—the skirt not to her knees, the waist barely to the top of her low corset. She put out a small hand white of itself, and smeared with rice-powder. Her hair was natural golden and Stilson thought her as beautiful and as spiritual as she had seemed beyond the footlights. "Perhaps not quite so young," he said to himself, "possibly twenty." In fact she was almost thirty. Her voice was sweet and childish, her manner confiding, as became so young-looking a person.

Stilson was unable to speak. He could only look

and long. And he felt guilty for looking—she was very slightly clad. She and Penrose talked commonplaces about the opening, Penrose flattering her effectively—Stilson thought his compliments crude and insulting, felt that she would resent them if she really understood them. She soon rose, touched the champagne glass to her lips, nodded and was gone. The curtain was up—they could hear the music and the scuffling of many feet on the stage overhead.

"You don't want to miss this, Mr. Penrose," said "John." "It's out o'sight."

They took a second glass of the champagne and left the rest for "John." When they were a few feet down the passage, Stilson went back to the door of the "cork-room." The shutter lifted at his knock and he cast his friendliest look into the wicked, good-humoured, bull-dog face. "My name is Stilson," he said. "You won't forget me if I should come again alone?"

"I never forget a face," said "John." "That's why I keep my job."

Stilson's infatuation increased with each of Marguerite's appearances. The longer he looked, the stronger was the spell woven over his senses by that innocent face, by those magnetic arms and legs. But he would have knocked down any one who had suggested that it was a sensuous spell.

He devoted his account of the performance for the *World* to Marguerite, the marvellous young interpreter of the innermost meaning of music.

The copy-reader "toned down" some of the superlatives, but left his picture in the main untouched. And the next day every one in the office was talking about "Stilson's story of that girl up at the Gold and Glory." It was the best possible advertisement for the hall and for the girl. Penrose called him on the telephone and laughed at him. "You *are* a fox," he said. "Old Barclay—he's the manager down there, you know—called me up a while ago and asked if I knew who wrote the puff of Feronia in the *World*. I told him it was you. Follow it up, old man."

And Stillson did "follow it up." That very night, toward the end of the performance he reappeared at the door of the "cork-room," nervous but determined, and with all he had left of last week's earnings in his pocket. "John" was most gracious as he admitted him and escorted him to a seat. The room was hazy with the smoke of cigars and cigarettes. Many men and several young women sat at the tables. A silver bucket containing ice and a bottle was a part of each group. There was a great pounding of feet on the floor overhead, the shriek and crash of the orchestra, the muffled roar of applause. All the young men were in evening clothes except Stilson who had come direct from the office. The young women were dressed for the street. Stilson guessed that they were "extras" as at that time the full force of the company must be on the stage.

The music ceased, the pounding of feet above

became irregular instead of regular, and into the room streamed a dozen of the chorus girls in tights, with bare necks and arms and painted lips and cheeks. Their eyes, surrounded by pigment, looked strangely large and lustrous. "Just one glass, then we must go up and change." And there was much "opening of wine" and laughter and holding of hands and one covert kiss in the shadow of an alcove where "John" could pretend not to see. Then the chorus girls rushed away to remove part of the powder, paint, and pigment and to put on street clothing. After a few minutes, during which Stilson watched the scene with a deepening sense of how out of place he was in it, the stage-door opened and Marguerite came in, dressed for the street in a pretty gray summer-silk with a gray hat to match. As she advanced through the smoke, several men stood, eager to be recognised. She smiled sweetly at each and hesitated. Stilson, his courage roused, sprang up and advanced boldly. "Good evening, Miss Feronia," he said, his eyes imploring yet commanding. She looked at him vaguely, then remembered him.

"You are Mr. Penrose's friend?" she said, polite but not at all cordial.

"Yes—my name's Stilson," he answered. "I was here last night."

"Oh—Mr. Stilson of the *World?*"

Stilson bowed. She was radiant now. "I wrote you a note to-day," she said. "It was *so* good of you."

"Would you sit and let me order something for you?"

"Certainly. I want to thank you——"

"Please don't," he said, earnestly and with a hot blush. "I'd—I'd rather you didn't remember me for that."

"Something" in the cork-room meant champagne or a wine equally expensive—the management forbade frugality under pain of exclusion. Miss Feronia was thirsty and Stilson thought he had never before seen any one who knew how to raise a glass and drink.

"You were good to me in the paper this morning," she said. "Why?"

"Because I love you."

The smoke, the room, the flaunting reminders of coarseness and sensuality and merchandising in smiles and sentiment—all faded away for him. He was worshipping at the shrine of his lady-love. And he thought her as pure and poetical as the temple of her soul seemed to his enchanted eyes. She looked at him over the top of her glass, with cynical, tolerant amusement. The rioting bubbles were rushing upward through the pale gold liquid to where her lips touched it. As she studied him, the cynicism slowly gave place to that dreamy expression which means much or little or nothing at all, according to what lies behind. To him it was entrancing; it meant mind, and heart, and soul.

"What a nice, handsome boy you are," she said, in a voice so gentle that he was not offended by its

hint that her experience was pitying his child-like inexperience.

And thus it began. At the end of the week they were married—he would have it so, and she, purified for the time by the fire of this boy's romantic love, thought it natural that the priest should be called in.

To him it was a dream of romance come true. His strength, direct, insistent, inescapable, compelled her. It pleased her thus to be whirled away by an impassioned boy, enveloping her in this tempestuous yet respectful love wholly new to her. She found it toilsome to live up to his ideal of her; but, with the aid of his blindness, she achieved it for two months and deserved the title her former associates gave her—"Sainte Marguerite." Then——

He came home one morning about two. As he opened the door of their flat, he heard heavy snoring from their little parlour. He struck a match and held it high. As the light penetrated and his eyes grew accustomed, he saw Marguerite—his wife—upon the lounge. Her only covering was a night-gown and she was half out of it. Her hair was tumbled and tangled. There were deep lines in her swollen, red face. Her mouth had fallen open and her expression was gross, animal, repulsive. She was sleeping a drunken sleep, in a room stuffy with the fumes of whiskey and of the stale smoke and stale stumps of cigarettes.

The match burned his fingers before he dropped it. He stumbled through the darkness to their bed-

room, and, falling upon the bed, buried his face in the pillow and sobbed like a child that has received a blow struck in brutal injustice. Out of the corners came a hundred suspicious little circumstances which no longer feared him or hid from him. They leered and jeered and mocked, shooting poisoned darts into that crushed and broken-hearted boy.

He rose and lit the gas. He went to a closet in a back room and took down a bottle of whiskey and a tumbler. In pyjamas and slippers he seated himself at the dining-room table. He poured out a brimming glass of the whiskey and drank it down. A moment later he drank another, then a third. His head reeled, his blood ran thick and hot through his veins. He staggered into the parlour and stood over his snoring wife. He shook her. "Come, wake up!" he shouted.

She groaned, murmured, tossed, suddenly sat up, catching her hair together with one hand, her night-dress with the other. "My God!" she exclaimed, in terror at his wild face, "Don't kill me! I can't help it—my father was that way!"

"Yes—come on!" he shouted. "You don't need to sneak away to drink. We'll drink together. We'll go to hell together."

And he kept his word. At the end of the year he was dismissed from the *World* for drunkenness. She went back to the stage and supported them both—she was a periodic drunkard, while he kept steadily at it. She left him, returned to him, loved

him, fled from him, divorced him, after an absence of nearly a year returned to make another effort to undo the crime she felt she had committed. As she came into the squalid room in a wretched furnished-room house in East Fifth Street where he had found a momentary refuge, he glared at her with bleared, bloodshot eyes and uttered a curse. She had a bundle in her arms.

"Look," she said, in a low tone, stooping beside the bed on which he lay in his rags.

He was staring stupidly into the face of a baby, copper-coloured, homely, with puffy cheeks and watery, empty eyes. He fell back upon the bed and covered his head.

Soon he started up in a fury. "It ought to have been strangled," he said.

"No! No!" she exclaimed, pressing the bundle tightly against her bosom.

He rose and went toward her. His expression was reassuring. He looked long into the child's face.

"Where are you living?" he asked at last. "Don't be afraid to tell me. I'll not come until"— He paused, then went on: "The road ought to lead upward from here." His glance went round the squalid room with roaches scuttling along its baseboard. He looked down at his grimed tatters, his gaping shoes, his dirty hands and black and broken nails.

"It certainly can't lead downward," he muttered. For the first time in months he felt ashamed. "Leave me alone," he said.

That night he wrote his mother for the loan of a hundred dollars—the first money from home since, at the end of his last long vacation, he left for New York and a career. In a week he was a civilised man again. Marlowe got him a place as reporter on the *Democrat*. It was immediately apparent that the road did indeed lead upward.

In a month he was restored to his former appearance—except that his hair was sprinkled with gray at the temples and he had several deep lines in his young yet sombre face.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"IN MANY MOODS."

EMILY was lunching alone at the Astor House in the innermost of the upstairs dining-rooms. She had just ordered when a woman entered—obviously a woman of the stage, although she was quietly dressed. She had a striking figure, small but lithe, and her gown was fitted to its every curve. As she passed Emily's table, to the left of the door, the air became odorous of one of those heavy, sweet perfumes whose basis is musk. Her face was round, almost fat, babyish at first glance. Her eyes were unnaturally sleepy and had many fine wrinkles at the corners. She seated herself at the far end of the room, so that she was facing the door and Emily.

She called the waiter in a would-be imperious way, but before she had finished ordering she was laughing and talking with him as if he were a friend. Emily noted that she spoke between her shut teeth, like a morphine-eater. As the waiter left, her face lighted with pleasure and greeting. Emily was amazed as she saw the man toward whom this look was directed—Stilson. He did not see Emily when he came in, and, as he seated himself opposite the

woman who was awaiting him, could not see her. Nor could Emily see his face, only his back and now and then one of his hands. As she eagerly noted every detail of him and of his companion, she suddenly discovered that there was a pain at her heart and that she was criticising the woman as if they were bitter enemies. "I am jealous of her," she thought, startled as she grasped all that was implied in jealousy such as she was now feeling.

When had she come to care especially for Stilson? And why? Above all, how had she fallen in love without knowing what she was doing? By what subtle chemistry had sympathy, admiration, trust, been combined into this new element undoubtedly love, yet wholly unlike any emotion she had felt before? "Mary must have set me to thinking," she said to herself.

The woman talked volubly, always with her teeth together and her eyes half-closed. But Emily could see that she was watching Stilson's face closely, lovingly. Stilson seemed to be saying nothing and looking absently out of the window. As Emily studied the woman, she was forced to confess that she was fascinating and that she had the attractive remnants of beauty. Her manner toward Stilson made her manner toward the waiter a few minutes before seem like a real self carefully and habitually hidden from some one whom she knew would disapprove it. "She tries to live up to him," thought Emily. "And how interesting she is to look at—what a beautiful figure, what graceful gestures—

and—I wonder if I shall look as well at—at her age?"

She could not eat. "How I wish I hadn't seen her with him. Now I shall imagine—everything, while before this I thought of that side of his life as if it didn't exist." She went as quickly as she could, for she felt like a spy and feared he would turn his head. In the next room, which was filled, she met Miss Furnival, the "fashion editor" of the *Democrat's* Sunday magazine. Miss Furnival asked if there were any tables vacant in the next room and hastened on to get the one which Emily had left.

An hour later Miss Furnival stopped at her desk. "Didn't you see Stilson in that room over at the Astor House?" she said, and Emily knew that gossip was coming.

"Was he there?" she asked.

"Yes—up at the far end of the room—with Marguerite Feronia. She used to be his wife, you know—and she divorced him when he went to pieces. And now they live together—at least, in the same house. Some say that he refused to re-marry her. But Mr. Gammell told me it was the other way, that she told a friend of his she wasn't fit to be Stilson's wife. She said she'd ruined him once and would never be a drag on him again."

"I suppose he's—tremendously in love with her?" Emily tried in vain to prevent herself from stooping to this question.

"I don't know," replied Miss Furnival. "Mr. Gammell told me he wasn't. He says Stilson is a

sentimentalist. It seems there is a child—some say a boy, some say a girl. She first told Stilson it was his, and then that it wasn't. Mr. Gammell says Stilson stays on to protect the child from her. She's a terror when she goes on one of her sprees—and she goes oftener and oftener as she grows older. You can always tell when she's on the rampage by the way Stilson acts. He goes about, looking as if somebody had insulted him and he'd been too big a coward to resent it."

Instead of being saddened by this recital, Emily was in sudden high spirits and her eyes were dancing. "I ought to be ashamed of myself," she thought, "but I can't help it. I wish to feel that he loathes her." Then she said aloud in a satirical tone, to carry off her cheerful expression: "I had no idea we had such a hero among us. And Mr. Stilson, of all men! I'm afraid it's a piece of Park Row imagination. Probably the truth is—let us say, less romantic."

"You don't know Mr. Gammell," Miss Furnival sighed. "He's the last man on earth to indulge in romance. He thinks Stilson ridiculous. But *I* think he's fine. He's the best of a few good men I've known in New York who weren't good only because of not having sense enough to be otherwise."

"Good," repeated Emily in a tone that expressed strong aversion to the word.

"Oh, mercy no! I don't mean that kind of good," said Miss Furnival. "He's not the kind of

good that makes everybody else love and long for wickedness."

After this Emily found herself making trips to the news-department on extremely thin pretexts, and returning cheerful or depressed according as she had succeeded or failed in her real object. And she began to think—to hope—that Stilson came to the Sunday department oftener than formerly. When he did come—and it certainly was oftener—he merely bowed to her as he passed her desk. But whenever she looked up suddenly, she found his gaze upon her and she felt that her vanity was not dictating her interpretation of it. She had an instinct that if he knew or suspected her secret or suspected that she was guessing his secret, she would see him no more.

As the months passed, there grew up between them a mutual understanding about which she saw that he was deceiving himself. She came to know him so well that she read him at sight. Being large and broad, he was simple, tricking himself when it would have been impossible for him to have tricked another. And it made her love him the more to see how he thought he was hiding himself from her and how unconscious he was of her love for him.

She had no difficulty in gratifying her longing to hear of him. He was naturally the most conspicuous figure in the office and often a subject of conversation. She was delighted by daily evidences of the power of his personality and by tributes to it. For Park Row liked to gossip about his eccentrici-

ties,—he was called eccentric because he had the courage of his individuality; or about his sagacity as an editor, his sardonic wit, his cynicism concealing but never hindering thoughtfulness for others. Shrinking from prying eyes, he was always unintentionally provoking curiosity. Hating flattery, he was the idol and the pattern of a score of the younger men of the profession. His epigrams were quoted and his walk was copied, his dress, his way of wearing his hair. Even his stenographer, a girl, unconsciously and most amusingly imitated his mannerisms. All the indistinct and inferior personalities about him, in the hope of making themselves less indistinct and inferior, copied as closely as they could those characteristics which, to them, seemed the cause of his standing up and out so vividly. One day Emily was passing through an inside room of the news-department on her way to the Day Telegraph Editor. Stilson was at a desk which he sometimes used. He had his back toward her and was talking into the portable telephone, She glanced at the surface of his desk. With eyes trained to take in details swiftly, she saw before she could look away an envelope addressed to Boughton and Wall, the publishers, a galley proof projecting from it, and on the proof in large type: "17 In Many Moods."

"He has written a book," she thought, "and that is the title." And she was filled with loving curiosity. She speculated about it often in the next six weeks; then she saw it on a table in Brentano's.

"Yes, it's been selling fairly well—for poetry, said the clerk. "There's really no demand for new poetry. Ninety-one cents. You'll find the verses very pretty."

Poetry—verses—Stilson a verse-maker! Emily was surprised and somewhat amused. There was no author's name on the title-page and it was a small volume, about twenty poems, the most of them short, each with a mood as a title—Anger, Parting, Doubt, Jealousy, Courage, Foreboding, Passion, Hope, Renunciation—at Renunciation she paused and read.

It was a crowded street-car and she bent low over the book to hide her face. She had the clue to the book. Indeed she presently discovered that it was to be found in every poem. Stilson had loved her long—almost from her first appearance in the office. And in these verses, breathing generosity and self-sacrifice, and well-aimed for one heart at least, he had poured out his love for her. It was sad, intense, sincere, a love that made her proud and happy, yet humble and melancholy, too.

As she read she seemed to see him looking at her, she felt his heart aching. Now he was holding her tight in his arms, raining kisses on her face, and making her blood race like maddest joy through her veins. Again, he was standing afar off, teaching her the lesson that the love that can refrain and renounce is the truest love. It was a revelation of this strange man even to her who had studied him long and penetratingly. So absorbed was she in

reading and re-reading that when she glanced up the car was at One hundred and fourteenth street—miles past her house. She walked down to and through the Park in an abandon of happiness over these love letters so strangely sent, thus accidentally received. "I must never let him see that I know," she thought—"yet how can I help showing it?"

She met him the very next day—almost ran into him as she left the elevator at the news-department floor where he was waiting to take it on its descent. For the first time she betrayed herself, looking at him with a burning blush and with eyes shining with the emotion she could not instantly conceal. She passed on swiftly, conscious that he was gazing after her startled. "I acted like a child," she said to herself, "and here I am, trembling all over as if I were seventeen." And then she wrought herself up with thinking what he might think of her. "Where is my courage?" she reassured herself, "What a poor love his would be if he misunderstood me." Nevertheless she was afraid that she had shown too much. "I suppose it's impossible to be courageous and restrained when one loves."

But when she saw him again—two days later, in the vestibule of the *Democrat* Building—it was her turn to be self-possessed and his to betray himself. He was swinging along with his head down and gloom in his face. He must have recognised her by her feet—distinctive in their slenderness and in the sort of boots that covered them. For he sud-

denly gave her a flash-like glance which said to her as plainly as words: "I am in the depths. If I only dared to reach out my hand to you, dear!" Then he recovered himself, reddened slightly, bowed almost guiltily and passed on without speaking.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FORCED ADVANCE.

IT was the talk of the Sunday office that Emily was being "frozen out." The women said it was her own fault—her looks had at last failed to give her a "pull." The men said it was some underhand scheme of Gammell's —what was more likely in the case of an attractive but thoroughly business-like woman such as Emily and such a man as Gammell, oriental in his ideas on women and of infinite capacity for meanness. Both the men and the women reached their conclusions by ways of prejudice; the men came nearer to the truth, which was that Gammell was bent upon punishing Emily, and that Emily, discouraged and suffering under a sense of injustice, was aiding him to justify himself to his superiors. The mere sight of her irritated him now. Success had developed his natural instinct to tyranny, and she represented rebellion intrenched and defiant within his very gates. One day he found Stilson waiting in his office to look over and revise his Sunday schedule. He hated Stilson because Stilson was his superior officer, and each week—in the interest of the reputation of the paper—was compelled to veto the

too audacious, too "yellow" projects of the sensational Gammell.

That day at sight of Stilson he with difficulty concealed his hate. He had just passed one of his enemies—Emily in a new dress and new hat, in every way a painful reminder of his discomfiture. And now here was his other enemy lying in wait, as he instinctively felt, to veto an article in which he took especial pride.

Stilson was not covert in his aversions. Diplomatic with no one, he rasped upon Gammell's highly-strung nerves like a screech in the ear of a neurotic. The wrangle began quietly enough in an exchange of veiled sarcasms and angry looks—contemptuous from Stilson, venomous from Gammell. But the double strain of Emily and Stilson was too strong for Gammell's discretion. From stealthy sneers, he passed to open thrusts. Stilson, as tyrannical as Gammell, if that side of his nature was roused, grew calm with rage and presently in an arrogant tone ordered Gammell to "throw away that vicious stuff, and let me hear no more about it."

"It is a pity, my dear sir," he went on, "that you should waste your talents. Why roll in the muck? Why can't you learn not to weary me with this weekly inspection of insanity?"

Gammell's eyes became pale green, his cheeks an unhealthy bluish gray. He cast about desperately for a weapon with which to strike and strike home. Emily was in his mind and, while he had not the faintest notion that Stilson cared for her or she for

him, he remembered Stilson's emphatic compliments on her work. "Perhaps if I were supplied with a more capable staff, we might get together articles that would be intelligent as well as striking. But what can I do, handicapped by such a staff, by such useless ornamentals as—well, as your Miss Bromfield."

"That reminds me." Stilson recovered his outward self-control at once. "I notice she has little in the magazine nowadays. Instead of exhausting yourself on such character-destroying stuff as this," with a disdainful gesture toward the rejected article, "you might be arranging for features such as she used to do and do very well."

"She's not of the slightest use here any longer." Gammell shrugged his shoulders and lifted his eyebrows. "She's of no use to the paper. And as the present Sunday editor doesn't happen to fancy her, why, she's of no use at all—now."

With a movement so swift that Gammell had no time to resist or even to understand, Stilson whirled him from his chair, and flung him upon the floor as if he were some insect that had shown sudden venom and must be crushed under the heel without delay.

"Don't kill me!" screamed Gammell, in a frenzy of physical fear, as he looked up at Stilson's face ablaze with the homicidal mania. "For God's sake, Stilson, don't murder me!"

The door opened and several frightened faces appeared there. Stilson, distracted from his purpose, turned on the intruders. "Close that door!"

he commanded. "Back to your work!" and he thrust the door into its frame. "Now, get up!" he said to Gammell. "You are one of those vile creatures that are brought into the world—I don't know how, but I'm sure without the interposition of a mother. Get up and brush yourself. And hereafter see that you keep your foul mind from your lips and eyes."

He stalked away, his footsteps ringing through the silent Sunday room where all were bending over their work in the effort to obliterate themselves. Within an hour the story of "the fight" was racing up and down Park Row and in and out of every newspaper office. But no one could explain it. And to this day Emily does not know why Gammell gave her late that afternoon the best assignment she had had in three months.

In the following week she received a letter from Burnham, general manager of Trescott, Anderson and Company, the publishers in Twenty-third Street. It was an invitation to call "at your earliest convenience in reference to a matter which we hope will interest you." She went in the morning on her way down town. Mr. Burnham was most polite—a twitching little man, inclined to be silly in his embarrassment, talking rapidly and catching his breath between sentences.

"We are making several changes in the conduct of our magazines," said he. "We wish to get some young blood—newspaper blood, in fact, into them. We wish to make them less—less prosy, more—

more up-to-date. No—not 'yellow'—by no means—nothing like that. Still, we feel that we ought to be a little—yes—livelier."

"Closer to the news—to current events and subjects?" suggested Emily.

"Yes,—precisely—you catch my meaning at once." Mr. Burnham was looking at her as if she were a genius. He was of those men who are dazzled when they discover a gleam of intelligence in a beautiful woman. "Now, we wish to get you to help us with our *World of Women*. Mrs. Parrott is the editor, as you perhaps know. She's been with us—yes—twenty-three years, eighteen years in her present position. And after making some inquiries, we decided to invite you to join the staff as assistant to Mrs. Parrott."

"I know the magazine," said Emily, "and I think I see the directions in which the improvements you suggest could be made. But I'm not dissatisfied with my present position. Of course—if—well—" She looked at Mr. Burnham with an ingenuous expression that hid the business guile beneath—"Of course, I couldn't refuse an opportunity to better myself."

"We—that is—" Mr. Burnham looked miserable and plucked wildly at his closely-trimmed gray and black beard. "May I ask what—what financial arrangement would be agreeable to you?"

"The offer must come from you, mustn't it?" said Emily, who had not been earning her own living without learning first principles.

"Yes—of course—naturally." Mr. Burnham held himself rigid in his chair, as if it required sheer force to restrain him from leaping forth and away. "Might I ask—what you are—what—what—return for your services the *Democrat* makes?"

"Sixty-five dollars a week," said Emily. "But my position there is less exacting than it would be here. I have practically no editorial responsibility. And editorial responsibility means gray hair."

"Yes—certainly—you would expect compensation for gray hair—dear me, no—I beg your pardon. What *were* we saying? Yes—we could hardly afford to pay so much as that—at the start, you know. I should say sixty would be quite the very best. But your hours would be shorter—and you would have the utmost freedom about writing articles, stories, and so forth. And of course you'd be paid extra for what you wrote which proved acceptable to us. Then too, it's a higher class of work—the magazines, you know—gives one character and standing."

"Oh—work is work," said Emily. "And I doubt if a magazine could give me character. I fear I'd have to continue to rely on myself for that."

"Oh—I beg your pardon. I'm very stupid today—I didn't mean——"

As he hesitated and looked imploringly at her, she said good-humouredly, "To suggest that my standing and not the standing of your magazine, was what you were trying to help?"

They laughed, they became friendly and he had

difficulty in keeping his mind upon business. He presently insisted upon sending for Mrs. Parrott—a stout, motherly person with several chins that descended through a white neck-cloth into a vast bosom quivering behind the dam of a high, old-fashioned corset. Emily noted that she was evidently of those women who exaggerate their natural sweetness into a pose of "womanly" sentiment and benevolence. She spoke the precise English of those who have heard a great deal of the other kind and dread a lapse into it. She was amusingly a "literary person," full of the nasty-nice phrases current among those literary folk who take themselves seriously as custodians of An Art and A Language. Emily's manner and dress impressed her deeply, and she soon brought in—not without labour—the names of several fashionable New Yorkers with whom she asserted acquaintance and insinuated intimacy. Emily's eyes twinkled at this exhibition of insecurity in one who but the moment before was preening herself as a high priestess at the highest altar.

In the hour she spent in the editorial offices of Trescott, Anderson and Company, Emily was depressed by what seemed to her an atmosphere of dulness, of staleness, of conventionality, of remoteness from the life of the day. "They live in a sort of cellar," she thought. "I don't believe I could endure being cut off from fresh air." After pretending to herself elaborately to argue the matter, she decided that she would not make the change.

But her real reason, as she was finally compelled to admit to herself, was Stilson. Not to see him, not to feel that he was near, not to be in daily contact with his life—it was unthinkable. She knew that she was so unbusinesslike in this respect that, if the *Democrat* cut her salary in half, she would still stay on. "I'm only a woman after all," she said to herself. "A man wouldn't do as I'm doing—perhaps." She did not in the least care. She was not ashamed of her weakness. She was even admitting nowadays a liking for the idea that Stilson could and would rule her. And she was not at all sure that the reason for this revolutionary liking was the reason she gave herself—that he would not ask her to do anything until he was sure she was willing to do it.

Two days after she wrote her refusal, Stilson sent for her. At first glance she saw that he was a bearer of evil tidings. And in the next she saw what the evil tidings were—that he had penetrated her secret and his own self-deception, and was remorseful, aroused, determined to put himself out of her life.

"You have refused your offer from Burnham?" He drew down his brows and set his jaw, as if he expected a struggle.

"Yes—I prefer to stay here. I have reasons." She felt reckless. She was eager for an opportunity to discuss these "reasons."

"You must accept."

"*I?—Must?*" She flushed and put her face up haughtily.

"Yes—I ask it. The position will soon be an advancement. And you cannot stay here."

"How do you know about this offer—so much about it?"

"I got it for you when—when I found that you must go."

She looked defiance. She saw an answering look of suffering and appeal.

"Why?" she said, in a low voice. "Why?"

"For two reasons," he replied. "I may tell you only one—Gammell. He will find a way to injure you. I know it. It would be folly for you to stay."

"And the other reason?"

He did not answer, but continued to look steadily at her.

"I—I—understand," she murmured at last, her look falling before his, and the colour coming into her face, "I will go."

"Thank you." He bowed with a courtesy that suggested the South in the days before the war. He walked beside her to the elevator. His shoulders were drooped as if under a heavy burden. His face was white and old, and its deep lines were like scars.

"Down, ten!" he called into the elevator-shaft as the car shot past on the up-trip. Soon the descending car stopped and the iron door swung back with a bang.

The door closed, she saw him gazing at her; and that look through the bars of the elevator door, haunted her. She had seen it in his face once before,

though not so strongly,—when she said good-bye to him as she was going away to Paris. But where else had she seen it? Weeks afterward, when she was talking to Mrs. Parrott of something very different, there suddenly leaped to the surface of her mind a memory—the public square in a mountain town, a man dead upon the stones, another near him, dying and turning his face toward the shelter whence he had come; and in his face the look of farewell to *the* woman.

"What is it, dear? Are you ill this morning?" asked Mrs. Parrott.

"Not—not very," answered Emily brokenly, and she vanished into her office and closed its door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MAN AND A "PAST."

HAD Emily and Stilson been idlers or of those workers who look upon work as a curse, they would have taken one of two courses. Either Stilson would have repudiated his obligations and they would have rushed together to hurry on to what would have been for them a moral catastrophe, or they would have remained apart to sink separately into mental and physical ruin. As it was, they worked—steadily, earnestly, using their daily routine of labour to give them strength for the fight against depression and despair.

Stilson, with the tenacity of purpose that made life for him one long battle, fought hopelessly. To him hope seemed always only the delusive foreshadow of oncoming disappointment, a lying messenger sent ahead by fate in cynical mockery of its human prey. And whenever his routine relaxed its compulsion, he laid himself on the rack and tortured himself with memories and with dreams.

Emily was aided by her temperament. She loved life and passionately believed in it. She was mentally incapable of long accepting an adverse de-

cree of destiny as final. But at best it was a wintry light that hope shed—between storms—upon her heart. Her chief source of courage was her ideal of him—the strong, the brave, the inflexible. "Forgive me!" she would say, humbling herself before his image in her mind after her outbursts of protest or her attacks of despondency. "I am not worthy of you. But oh,—I want you—need you —*so!*"

Within a short time it was apparent that from the professional standpoint she had done well in going to the *World of Women*. After the newspaper, the magazine seemed play. In the *Democrat* office she had not been looked upon as extraordinary. Here they regarded her as a person of amazing talent—for a woman. They marvelled at her energy, at her quickness, at her flow of plans for articles and illustrations. And without a hint from her they raised her salary to what she had been getting, besides accepting proposals she made for several articles to be written by herself.

They were especially delighted with her management of "the old lady"—the only name ever given Mrs. Parrott when she was out of hearing. She patronised Emily in a motherly way, and Emily submitted like a dutiful daughter. She accepted Emily's suggestions as her own. "My dear," she said one day, "I'm so glad I've got you here to help me put my ideas through. I've been suggesting and suggesting in vain for years." And Emily looked grate-

ful and refused to respond to the sly smile from Mr. Burnham who had overheard.

Emily did not under-estimate Mrs. Parrott's usefulness to her. In thirty years of experience as a writer and an editor, "the old lady" had accumulated much that was of permanent value, as well as a mass of antiquated or antiquating trash. Emily belonged to the advance guard of a generation that had small reverence for the "prim ideals of the past." Mrs. Parrott knew the "provincial mind," the magazine-reading mind, better than did Emily—or at least was more respectful of its ideas, more cautious of offending its notions of what it believed or thought it ought to believe. And often when Emily through ignorance or intolerance would have "gone too far" for any but a New York constituency, Mrs. Parrott interposed with a remonstrance or a suggestion which Emily was acute enough to appreciate. She laughed at these "hypocrisies" but—she always had circulation in mind. She liked to startle, but she knew that she must startle in ways that would attract, not frighten away.

But conscientious though she was in her work, and careful to have her evenings occupied, she was still forlorn. Life was purposeless to her. She was working for self alone, and she who had never cared to excess for self, now cared nothing at all. In her own eyes her one value was her value to Stilson. She reproached herself for what seemed to her a low, a degrading view, traversing all she had theretofore preached and tried to practice. But she

had only to pause to have her heart aching for him and her thoughts wandering in speculations about him or memories of him.

Her friends—Joan, Evelyn, Theresa—wondered at the radical changes in her, at her abstraction, her nervousness, her outbursts of bitterness. She shocked Joan and Evelyn, both now married, with mockeries at marriage, at love, at every sentiment of which they took a serious view. One day—at Joan's, after a tirade against the cruelty, selfishness, and folly of bringing children into the world—she startled her by snatching up the baby and burying her face in its voluminous skirts and bursting into a storm of sobs and tears.

"What is it, Emmy?" asked Joan, taking away the baby as he, recovering from his amazement, set up a lusty-lunged protest against such conduct and his enforced participation therein.

Emily dried her eyes and fell to laughing as hysterically as she had wept. "Poor baby," she said. "Let me take him again, Joan." And she soon had him quiet, and staring at a large heart-shaped locket which she slowly swung to and fro just beyond the point, or rather, the cap, of his little lump of a nose. "I'm in a bad way, Joan," she went on. "I can't tell you. Telling would do no good. But my life is in a wretched tangle, and I don't see anything ahead but—but—tangles. And as I can't get what I want, I won't take anything at all."

"You are old enough to know better. Your good sense teaches you that if you did get what you want, you'd probably wish you hadn't."

"That's the trouble," said Emily, shaking her head sadly at the baby. "My good sense in this case teaches me just the reverse. I've seen a man —a real man this time—*my* man morally, mentally, physically. He's a man with a mind, and a heart, and what I call a conscience. He's been through —oh, everything. And error and suffering have made him what he is—a man. He's a man to look up to, a man to lean upon, a man to—to care for." Her expression impressed Joan's skepticism. "Do you wonder?" she said.

"No." Joan looked away. "But—forget—put him out of your life. You are trying to—aren't you?"

"To forget? No—I can't even try. It would be useless. Besides, who wants to forget? And there's always a *chance*."

"At least"—Joan spoke with conviction—"you're not likely to *do* anything—absurd."

"That's true—unfortunately. *I* couldn't be trusted, I'm afraid. But—" Emily's laugh was short and cynical—"my man can."

"He must be a—a sort of prig." Joan felt suspicious of a masculine that could stand out against the temptation of such a feminine as her adored Emily.

"See! Even you couldn't be trusted. But no, he's not a prig—just plain honourable and decent, in an old-fashioned way that exasperates me—and thrills me. That's why I say he's a man to lean upon and believe in."

Emily felt better for having talked with some one about him and went away almost cheerful. But she was soon down again, and time seemed only to aggravate her unhappiness. "I must be brave," she said. "But why? Why should I go on? He has Mary—I have nothing." And the great dread formed in her mind—the dread that he was forgetting her. If not, why did he not seek her out, at least reassure himself with his own eyes that she was still alive? And she had to look steadily at her memory-pictures, at his eyes, and the set of his jaw, to feel at all hopeful that he was remembering, was living his real life for her.

* * * * * *

Three weeks after Emily's departure, on a Thursday night, Stilson left his assistant in charge and went home at eleven. As he entered his house—in West Seventy-third street near the river—he saw strange wraps on the table in the entrance hall, heard voices in the drawing-room. He went on upstairs. As he was hurrying into evening dress he suddenly paused, put on a dressing-gown, and went along the hall. He gently turned the knob of a door at the end and entered. There was a dim light, as in the hall, and he could at once make out all the objects in the room.

He crossed to the little bed, and stood looking down at Mary—her yellow hair in a coil on top of her head, one small hand clinched and thrust between the pillow and her cheek, the other lying white and limp upon the coverlid. He stood there

several minutes without motion. When he reappeared in the bright light of his dressing-room, his face was calm, a complete change from its dark and drawn expression of a few minutes before.

He was soon dressed, and descended to the drawing-room. Like the hall, like the whole house, like its mistress, this room was rather gaudy, but not offensive or tasteless. The most conspicuous objects in its decoration were two pictures. One was a big photograph of a slim, ethereal-looking girl—the dancer he had loved and married. She was dressed to reveal all those charms of youth apparently just emerging from childhood—a bouquet of budding flowers fresh from the garden in the early morning. The other was a portrait of her by a distinguished artist—the face and form of the famous dancer of the day. The face was older and bolder, with the sleepy sensuousness and sadness that characterised her now. The neck and arms were bare; and the translucent and clinging gown, aided by the pose, offered, yet refused, a view of every line of her figure.

Marguerite was sitting almost under the portrait; on the same sofa was Victoria Fenton, looking much as when Stilson first met her—on her trip to America in the autumn in which Emily returned from Paris. She still had to the unobservant that charm of "the unawakened"—as if there were behind her surface-beauty not good-natured animalism, but a soul awaiting the right conjurer to rouse it to conscious life.

Marlowe was seated on the arm of a chair, smoking a cigarette. He was dressed carefully as always, and in the latest English fashion. He had an air of prosperity and contented indifference. His once keen face was somewhat fat and, taken with his eyes and mouth, suggested that his wife's cardinal weakness had infected him. Stilson was late and they went at once to supper—Marlowe and Miss Fenton had been invited for supper because that was the only time convenient for all these night-workers.

"You are having a great success?" said Stilson to Victoria. She was exhibiting at the Lyceum in one of Joan's plays which had been partly rewritten by Marlowe.

"Yes—the Americans are good to me—so generous and friendly," replied Victoria. "Of course the play is poor. I couldn't have done anything with it if George hadn't made it over so cleverly."

Stilson smiled. Banning, the dramatic critic, had told him that her part was beyond Miss Fenton, and that only her stage-presence and magnetic voice saved her from failure. "You players must have a mournful time of it with these stupid playwrights," he said with safe sarcasm.

"You can't imagine!" Victoria flung out her long, narrow white hand in a stage-gesture of despair. "And they are so ungrateful after we have created their characters for them and have given them reputation and fortune."

Stilson noted that Marlowe was listening with a

faint sneer. His manner towards his wife was a surface-politeness that too carelessly concealed his estimate of her mental limitations. Stilson's manner toward "Miss Feronia"—he called her that more often than he called her Marguerite—was almost distant courtesy, the manner of one who tenaciously maintains an impenetrable wall between himself and another whose relations to him would naturally be of the closest intimacy. And while Victoria was self-absorbed, obviously never questioning that her husband was her admirer and devoted lover, Marguerite was nervously attentive to Stilson's words and looks, at once delighted and made ill-at-ease by his presence.

Her eyes were by turns brilliant and stupidly dull. Either a stream of words was issuing from between her shut teeth or her lids were drooped and she seemed to be falling asleep. Marlowe recognised the morphine-eater and thought he understood why Stilson was gloomy and white. Victoria ate, Marguerite talked, and the two men listlessly smoked. At the first opportunity they moved together and Marlowe began asking about the *Democrat* and his acquaintances there.

"And what has become of Miss Bromfield?" he asked, after many other questions.

"She's gone to a magazine," replied Stilson, his voice straining to be colourless. But Marlowe did not note the tone and instantly his wife interrupted:

"Yes, what has become of Miss Bromfield—didn't I hear George asking after her? You know,

Mr. Stilson, I took George away from her. Poor thing, it must have broken her heart to lose him." And she vented her empty affected stage-laugh.

Colour flared in the faces of both the men, and Stilson went to the open fire and began stirring it savagely.

"Pray don't think I encouraged my wife to that idea," Marlowe said, apparently to Marguerite. "It's one of her fixed delusions."

Victoria laughed again. "Oh, Kilboggan told me all about you two—in Paris and down at Monte Carlo. He hears everything. I forgot it until you spoke her name. 'Pasts' don't interest me."

Marlowe flushed angrily and his voice was tense with convincing indignation as he said, "I beg you, Victoria, not to put Miss Bromfield in this false light. No one but a—a Kilboggan would have concocted and spread such a story about such a woman."

His tone forbade further discussion, and there was a brief, embarrassed silence. Then Marguerite went rattling on again. Stilson came back to the table and lit a cigarette with elaborate and deliberate care. Marlowe continued to stare to the front, his face expressionless, but his eyes taking in Stilson's expression without seeming to do so. They were talking again presently, but each was constrained toward the other. Marlowe knew that Stilson was suspecting him, but, beyond being flattered by the tribute to his former "gallantry," he did not especially care—had he not said all that

he honourably could say? Emily, not he, had insisted upon secrecy.

As for Stilson, his brain seemed to be submerged in a plunge of boiling blood. Circumstances of Marlowe's and Emily's relations rose swiftly one upon another, all linking into proof. "How can I have been so blind?" he thought.

The Marlowes did not linger after supper. Marguerite went to bed and Stilson shut himself in his own suite. He unlocked and opened a drawer in the table in his study. He drew from under several bundles of papers the sketch of Emily which the *Democrat* had reproduced with her despatch from the Furnaceville strike. He looked contempt and hate at the dreamy, strong yet sweet, young face. "So you are Marlowe's cast-off?" he said with a sneer. "And I was absurd enough—to believe in you—in any one."

He flung the picture into the fire. Then he sat in the big chair, his form gradually collapsing and his face taking on that expression of misery which seemed natural to its deep lines and strong features.

"And when Mary grows up," he said aloud, "no doubt she too—" But he did not clearly finish the thought. He shrank ashamed from the stain with which he in his unreasoning anguish had smirched that white innocence.

After a while he reached into the fireplace and took from the dead coals in the corner the cinder of the picture. Very carefully he drew it out and dropped it into an envelope. That he sealed and put away in the drawer.

CHAPTER XXX.

TWO AND A TRIUMPH.

BUT Stilson's image of her was no longer clear and fine; and in certain lights, or, rather, shadows, it seemed to have a sinister unloveliness. He assured himself that he felt toward her as before. But—he respected her with a reservation; he loved her with a doubt; he believed in her—did he believe in her at all? He was continually regilding his idol, which persistently refused to retain the gilt.

After many days and many nights of storms he went to the Park one morning, and for two hours,—or, until there was no chance of her coming—he walked up and down near the Seventy-second street entrance. He returned the second morning and the third. As he was pacing mechanically, like a sentry, he saw her—her erect, graceful figure, her red-brown hair that grew so beautifully about her brow and her ears; then her face, small and delicate, the skin very smooth and pale—circles under her violet eyes. At sight of him there came a sudden gleam from those eyes, like an electric spark, and then a look of intense anxiety.

"You are ill?" she said, "Or there is some trouble?"

"I've been very restless of late—sleeping badly," he replied, evasively. "And you?"

They had turned into a side path to a bench where they would not be disturbed. They looked each at the other, only to look away instantly. "Oh, I've worked too hard and—I fancy I've been too much alone." Emily spoke carelessly, as of something in the past that no longer matters.

"Alone," he repeated. "Alone." When his eyes met hers, neither could turn away. And on a sudden impulse he caught her in his arms. "My dear, my dear love," he exclaimed. And he held her close against him and pressed her cheek against his.

"I thought you would never come," she murmured. "How I have reproached you!"

He only held her the closer for answer. And there was a long pause before he said: "I can't let you go. I can't. Oh, Emily, my Emily—yes, mine, mine—I've loved you so long—you know it, do you not? You've been the light of the world to me—the first light I've seen since I was old enough to know light from darkness. And when you go, the light goes. And in the dark the doubts come."

"Doubts?" she said, drawing away far enough to look at him. "But how can you doubt? You must *know*."

"And I *do* know when I see you. But when I'm in the dark and breathing the poison of my own mind—Forgive me. Don't ask me to explain, but forgive me. Even if I had the right to be here, the

right to say what I've been saying, still I'd be unfit. How you would condemn me, if you knew."

"I don't wish to know, dear, if you'd rather not tell me," she said gently. "And you have a right to be here. And no matter what you have been or are, I'd not condemn you." Her voice sank very low. "I'd still love you."

"You'd have had to live my life to know what those last words mean to me," he said, "how happy they make me."

"But I know better than you think," she answered. "For my life has not been sheltered, as are the lives of most women. It has had temptations and defeats."

He turned his eyes quickly away, but not so quickly that she failed to catch the look of fear in them. "What are you thinking?" she asked earnestly. "Dear, if there are doubts, may they not come again? I saw in your eyes just then—what was it?"

"Do not ask me. I must fight that alone and conquer it."

"No—you must tell me," she said, resolutely. "I feel that I have a right to know."

"It was nothing—a lie that I heard. I'd not shame myself and insult you by repeating it."

He looked at her appealingly, saw that she was trembling. "You know that I did not believe it?" he said, catching her hand. But she drew away.

"Was it about me and—Marlowe?" she asked.

"But I knew that it was false," he protested.

She looked at him unflinchingly. "It was true," she said. "We were—everything—each to the other."

He sat in a stupor. At last he muttered: "Why didn't you deceive me? Doubt was better than—than this."

"But why should I? I don't regret what I did. It has helped to make me what I am."

"Don't—don't," he implored. "I admit that that is true. But—you are making me suffer—horribly. You forget that I love you."

"Love!" There was a strange sparkle in her eyes and she raised her head haughtily. "Is *that* what you call *love?*" And she decided that she would wait before telling him that she had been Marlowe's wife.

"No," he answered, "it is not what I call love. But it is a part of love—the lesser part, no doubt, but still a part. I love you in all the ways a man can love a woman. And I love you because you are a complete woman, capable of inspiring love in every way in which a woman appeals to a man. And it hurts me—this that you've told me."

"But you, your life, what you've been through—I honour you for it, love you the more for it. It has made me know how strong you are. I love you best for the battles you've lost."

"Yes," he said. "I know that those who have lived and learned and profited are higher and stronger than the innocent, the ignorant. But I wish—" He hesitated, then went on doggedly, "I'd

be lying to you if I did not say that I wish I did not know this."

"Then you'd rather I had deceived you—evaded or told a falsehood."

"No," he said with emphasis, and he looked at her steadily and proudly. "I can't imagine you telling me a falsehood or making any pretense whatever. At least I can honestly say that after the first purely physical impulse of anger, I didn't for an instant suspect you of any baseness. And whenever an ugly thought about you has shown itself in my mind, it has been—choked to death before it had a chance to speak."

"I know that," she said, "I know it, dear." And she put her hand on his.

"And—I wouldn't have you different from what you are. You are a certain kind of human being—*my* kind—the kind I admire through and through—yes, through and through. And—you are the only one of the kind in all this world, so far as I have seen. I don't care by what processes you became what you are. You say you love me for the battles I've lost. Honestly, would you like to hear, even like to have me tell you, in detail, all that I've been through? Aren't you better satisfied just to know the results?"

"Yes," she admitted, and she remembered how she had hated Marguerite Feronia that day at the Astor House, how she never saw a lithograph of her staring from a dead wall or a bill board or a shop window that she did not have a pang.

"Then how can you blame me?" he urged.

"I — I guess — I don't," she said with a little smile.

"But I blame myself," he went on. "I —yes, I, the immaculate, arraigned you at the bar for trial and——"

"Found me guilty and recommended me to the mercy of the court?"

"No—not quite so bad as that," he replied. "But don't think I'm not conscious of the colossal impudence of the performance—one human being sitting in judgment on another!"

"It's done every minute," she said cheerfully. "And we make good judges of each other. All we have to do is to look inside ourselves, and we don't need to listen to the evidence before saying 'Guilty.' But what was the verdict at my trial?"

"It hadn't gone very far before we changed places—you became the accuser and I went into the prisoner's pen. And I could only plead guilty to the basest form of that base passion, jealousy. I couldn't deny that you were noble and good, that it was unthinkable that you could be guilty of anything low. I was compelled to admit that if you had been—married—"

"Was any evidence admitted on that point?" she asked with a sly smile at the corners of her mouth.

"No," he said, then gave her a quick, eager glance. At sight of the quizzical expression in

her eyes, he blushed furiously but did not look away.

"You know," he said, and he put his arm about her shoulders, "that I love you in the way you wish to be loved. I don't deny that I'm not very consistent. My theory is sound, but—I'm only a human man, and I'd rather my theory were not put to the test in your case."

"But it has been put to the test," she replied, "and it has stood the test." And then she told him the whole story.

He called her brave. "No one but you, only you, would have had the courage to end it when you did—away off there, alone."

"I thought it was brave myself at the time," she said. "Then afterwards I noticed that it would have taken more courage to keep on. Any woman would have freed herself if she had been independent as I was, and with no conventionalities to violate."

Stilson said thoughtfully after a pause: "It did not enter my head that you had been married. And even now, the fact only makes the whole thing more vague and unreal."

"It took two minutes to be married," replied Emily, "and less to be divorced—my lawyer wrote proudly that it was a record-breaking case for that court, though I believe they've done better elsewhere in Dakota."

"What a mockery!"

"Oh, I don't think so. The marriage isn't made

by the contract and the divorce isn't made by the court. The mere formalities that recognise the facts may be necessary, but they can't be too brief."

"But it sets a bad example, encourages people to take flippant views of serious matters."

"I wonder," said Emily doubtingly, "do the divorced people set so bad an example as those who live together hating each the other, degrading themselves, and teaching their children to quarrel. And haven't flippant people always been flippant, and won't they always continue to be?"

"It may be so, but men and women ought to know what they are about before they—" Stilson paused and suddenly remembered. "I shan't finish that sentence," he said, with a short laugh. "I don't know what you know about me, and I don't want to. I can't talk of my affairs where they concern other people. But I feel that I must——"

"You need not, dear," said Emily. "I think I understand how you are situated. And—I—I—Well, if the time ever comes when things are different, then—" She dropped her serious tone—"Meanwhile, I'm 'by the grace of God, free and independent' and——"

"I love you," he said, the hot tears standing in his eyes as he kissed her hand. "Ever since the day you came back from the mines, I've known that I loved you. And ever since then, it's been you, always you. The first thought in the morning, the last thought at night, and all day long whenever

I looked up—you, shining up there where I never hope to reach you. Not shining *for* me, but, thank God, shining *on* me, my Emily."

"And now—I've come down." She was laughing at him in a loving way. "I'm no longer your star but—only a woman."

"*Only* a woman!" He drew a long breath and his look made her blood leap and filled her with a sudden longing both to laugh and to cry.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHERE PAIN IS PLEASURE.

THAT fall and winter Emily and Stilson met often in the walk winding through the Park from Seventy-second street to the Plaza. Usually it was on Wednesday morning—his "lazy day"; always it was "by accident." Each time they separated they knew they were soon to meet again. But the chance character of their meetings—once in a while they did miss each the other—maintained a moral fiction which seemed to them none the less vital to real morals because it was absurd.

What with their work and meetings to look forward to and meetings to look back upon, time did not linger with them. Often they were happy. Rarely were they miserable, and then, instead of yielding to despair and luxuriating in grief and woe, they fought valiantly to recover the tranquillity which would enable them to enjoy what they might have and to be mutually helpful. They were not sentimental egotists. They would have got little sympathy from those who weep in theatres and blister the pages of tragic fiction. Neither tried to pose before the other or felt called upon to tickle his own and the other's vanity with mournful looks

and outbursts. They loved not themselves, but each the other.

They suffered much in a simple, human way—not the worked-up anguish of the "strong situation," but just such lonely heartaches as visit most lives and make faces sober and smiles infrequent and laughter reluctant, as early youth is left behind. And they carefully hid their suffering each from the other with the natural considerateness of unselfish love.

Once several weeks passed in which she did not "happen" to meet him. She grew rapidly melancholy and resentful of the narrowness of the sources and limits of her happiness. "He is probably ill—very ill," she thought, "And how outside of his life I am! I could not go to him, no matter what was happening." She called up the *Democrat* office on the telephone at an hour when he was never there. The boy who answered said he was out. "When will he be in?" "I cannot tell you. He has been away for several days." "Is he ill?" she ventured. No, he was not ill—just away on business.

She read in the *Evening Post* the next night that Marguerite Feronia was still confined to the house, suffering with nervous prostration. "She has been ill frequently during the past year," said the *Post*, "and it is reported that it will be long before she returns to the stage, if ever." Emily at once understood and reproached herself for her selfishness. What must Stilson be enduring, shut in with the

cause and centre of his wretchedness—that unfortunate woman through whom he was expiating, not his crimes but his follies. "How wicked life is," she thought bitterly. "How intelligent its malice seems. To punish folly more severely than crime, and ignorance more savagely than either—it is infamous!" And as she brooded over his wrecked life and her aloneness, her courage failed her. "It isn't worth while to go on," she said. "And I ask so little—such a very little!"

When she met him in the Park again, his face was as despondent as hers. They went to a bench in one of the by-paths. It was spring, and the scene was full of the joyous beginnings of grass and leaves and flowers and nests.

"Once there was a coward," he began at last. "A selfish coward he was. He had tumbled down his life into ruins and was sitting among them. And another human being came that way. She was brave and strong and had a true woman's true soul—generosity, sympathy, a beautiful uncondescending compassion. And this coward seized her and tried to chain her among his ruins. He gave nothing—he had nothing to give. He took everything—youth, beauty, a splendid capacity for love and happiness." He paused. "Oh, it was base!" he burst out. "But in the end he realised and—he has come to his senses."

"But she would not go," said Emily softly.

"He drove her away," he persisted. "He saw to it that she went back to life and hope. And when

she saw that he would have her go, she did not try to prevent him from being true to his better self. She went for his sake."

"But listen to *me*," she said. "Once there was a woman, young in years, but compelled to learn a great deal very quickly. And fate gave her four principal teachers. The first taught her to value freedom and self respect—taught it by almost costing her both. The second taught her that love is more than being in love with love—and that lesson almost cost her her happiness for life. The third teacher taught her that love is more than a blind, reckless passion. And then, just when she could understand it, perhaps just in time to prevent the third lesson from costing her her all—then came," she gave him a swift, vivid glance "her fourth teacher. He taught her love, what it really is—that it is the heart of a life. The heart of her life."

He was not looking at her, but his eyes were shining.

"Then," she went on, "one day this man—unselfishly but, oh, so blindly—told the woman that because fate was niggard, he would no longer accept what he might have, would no longer let her have what meant life to her. He said: 'Go—out into the dark. Be alone again.'"

She paused and turned toward him. "He thought he was just and kind," she said. "And he *was* brave; but not just or kind. He was blind and —cruel; yes, very cruel."

"It can't be true," he said. "No—it is impulse—pity—a sacrifice."

She saw that his words were addressed to himself in reproach for listening to her. "It was unworthy of him," she went on, "unworthy of his love for her. How could he imagine that only he knew what love is—the happiness of its pain, almost happier than the happiness of its joy? Why should I have sought freedom, independence, if not in order that I may use my life as I please, use it to win—and keep—the best?"

"I don't know what to think," he said uncertainly. "You've made it impossible for me to do as I intended—at present."

Emily's spirits rose—in those days the present was her whole horizon. "Don't be selfish," she said in a tone of raillery. "Think of me, once in a while. And *please* try to think of me as capable of knowing my own mind. I don't need to be told what I want."

"I beg your pardon," he said with mock humility. "I shall never be so impertinent again."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HIGHWAY OF HAPPINESS.

EMILY often rebelled. Her common sense was always catching her at demanding, with the irrational arrogance of human vanity, that the course of the universe be altered and adjusted to her personal desires. But these moods came only after she and Stilson had not been together for a longer time than usual. When she saw him again, saw the look in his eyes—love great enough to deny itself the delight of expression and enjoyment—she forgot her complaints in the happiness of loving such a man, of being loved by him. "It might be so much worse, unbearably worse," she thought. "I might lose what I have. And then how vast it would seem."

Stilson always felt the inrush of a dreary tide when they separated. One day the tide seemed to be sweeping away his courage. Unhappiness behind him in the home that was no longer made endurable by Mary's presence, now that her mother's condition compelled him to keep her at the convent; contention, the necessity of saying and doing disagreeable things, ahead of him at the office—"I have always been a fool," he thought, "a sentimental fool. No wonder life lays on the

lash." But he gathered a bundle of newspapers from the stand at Fifty-ninth Street and Madison Avenue and, seating himself in the corner of the car, strapped on his mental harness and began to tug and strain at his daily task—"like a dumb ox," he muttered.

He was outwardly in his worst mood—the very errand boy knew that it was not a good day to ask favours. A man to whom he had loaned money came in to pay it and, leaving, said: "God will bless you." Stilson sat staring at a newspaper. "God will bless me," he repeated bitterly. "I shall have some new misfortune before the day is over."

And late that afternoon a boy brought him a note —he recognised the handwriting of the address as Marguerite's. "The misfortune," he thought, tearing it open. He read:

This won't be delivered to you until I'm out at sea. I'm going abroad. You'll not see me again. I'm only in the way—a burden to you and a disgrace to Mary. You'll find out soon enough how I've gone, without my telling you. Perhaps I'm crazy—I never did have much self-control. But I'm gone, and gone for good, and you're left free with your beloved Mary.

I know you hate me and I can't stand feeling it any longer. I couldn't be any more miserable, no, nor you either. And we may both be happier. I never loved anybody but you—I suppose I still love you, but I must get away where I won't feel that I'm always being condemned.

Don't think I'm blaming you—I'm not so crazy as that.

Try to think of me as gently as—no, don't think of me—

forget me—teach Mary to forget me. I'm crying, Robert, as I write this. But then I've done a lot of that since I realised that not even for your sake could I shake off the curse my father put on me before I was born.

Good-bye, Robert. Good-bye, Mary. I put the ring—the one you gave me when we were married—in the little box in the top drawer of your chiffonière where you keep your scarf-pins. I hope I shan't live long, If I had been brave, I'd have killed myself long ago.

Good-bye,
MARGUERITE.

One sentence in her letter blazed before his mind —"You'll find out soon enough how I've gone, without my telling you." What did she mean? In her half-crazed condition had she done something that would be notorious, would be remembered against Mary? He pressed the electric button. "Ask Mr. Vandewater to come here at once, please," he said to the boy. Vandewater, the dramatic news reporter, hurried in. "I'm about to ask a favour of you, Vandewater," he said to him, "and I hope you'll not speak of it. Do you know anyone at the Gold and Glory—well, I mean?"

"Mayer, the press agent, and I are pretty close."

"Will you call him up and ask him—tell him it's personal and private—what he knows about Miss Feronia's movements lately. Use this telephone here."

At "Miss Feronia," Vandewater looked conscious and nervous. Like all the newspaper men, he knew of the "romance" in Stilson's life, and, like many of the younger men, he admired and envied him be-

cause of the fascinating mystery of his relations with the famous dancer.

The Gold and Glory was soon connected with Stilson's branch-telephone and he was impatiently listening to Vandewater's part of the conversation. Mayer seemed to be saying a great deal, and Vandewater's questions indicated that it was an account of some unusual happening. After ten long minutes, Vandewater hung up the receiver and turned to Stilson.

"I—I—it is hard to tell you, Mr. Stilson," he began with mock hesitation.

"No nonsense, please." Stilson shook his head with angry impatience. "I must know every fact —*every* fact—and quickly."

"Mayer says she sailed on the *Fürst Bismarck* to-day—that she's—she's taken a man named Courtleigh, an Englishman—a young fellow in the chorus. Mayer says she sent a note to the manager, explaining that she was going abroad for good, and that Courtleigh came smirking in and told the other part. He says Courtleigh is a cheap scoundrel, and that her note read as if she were not quite right in her head."

"Yes—and what's Mayer doing? Is he telling everybody? Is he going to use it as an advertisement for the house?"

Vandewater hesitated, then said: "He's not giving it to the afternoon papers. He's writing it up to send out to-night to the morning papers."

"Um!" Stilson looked grim, savage. "Go up

there, please, and do your best to have it suppressed."

"Yes." Vandewater was swelling with mystery and importance. "You may rely on me, Mr. Stilson. And I shall respect your confidence."

"I assume that you are a gentleman," Stilson said sarcastically. He had taken Vandewater into his confidence because he had no choice, and he had little hope of his being able to hold his tongue. "Thank you. Good day."

As soon as he was alone he seated himself at the telephone and began calling up his friends or acquaintances in places of authority on the newspapers, morning and evening. Of each he made the same request—"If a story comes in about Marguerite Feronia, will you see that it's put as mildly as possible, if you must print it?" And from each he got an assurance that the story would be "taken care of." When he rose wearily after an hour of telephoning, he had done all that could be done to close the "avenues of publicity." He locked the door of his office and flung himself down at his desk, and buried his face in his arms.

In a series of mournful pictures the progress of Marguerite to destruction flashed across his mind, one tragedy fading into the next. Youth, beauty, joyousness, sweetness, sensibility, fading, fading, fading until at last he saw the wretched, broken, half-insane woman fling herself headlong from the precipice, with a last despairing glance backward at all that her curse had stripped from her.

And the tears tore themselves from his eyes. The evil in her was blotted out. He could see only the Marguerite who had loved him, had saved him, who was even now flying because to her diseased mind it seemed best for her to go. "Poor girl!" he groaned. "Poor child that you are!"

* * * * * *

Emily, on her way down-town the next morning in an "L" train, happened to glance at the newspaper which the man in the next seat was reading. It was the *Herald*, and she saw a two-column picture of Marguerite. She read the bold headlines: "Marguerite Feronia, ill. The Gold and Glory's great dancer goes abroad, never to return to the stage or the country."

She left the train at the next station, bought a *Herald* and read:

Among the passengers on the Fürst Bismarck yesterday was Marguerite Feronia, who for more years than it would be kind to enumerate has fascinated the gilded youth that throng the Gold and Glory nightly. Miss Feronia has been in failing health for more than a year. Again and again she has been compelled to disappoint her audiences. At last she realised that she was making a hopeless fight against illness and suddenly made up her mind to give up. She told no one of her plans until the last moment. In a letter from the steamship to the manager of the Gold and Glory she declared that she would never return and that she did not expect to live long.

The account was brief out of all proportion to the headlines, and to the local importance of the subject. Emily went at once to the newspaper files when she reached her office. In no other pa-

per was there so much as in the *Herald.* She could find no clue to the mystery.

"At least he is free," she thought. "And that is the important point. At least he is free—*we* are free."

Although she repeated this again and again and tried to rouse herself to a sense of the joy it should convey, she continued in a state of groping depression.

Toward three o'clock came a telegram from Stilson—"Shall you be at home this evening? Most anxious to see you. Please answer, *Democrat* office." She telegraphed for him to come, and her spirits began to rise. At last the dawn! At last the day! And her eyes were sparkling and she was so gay that her associates noted it, and "the old lady" confided to Mr. Burnham that she "had been wondering how much longer such a sweet, beautiful girl would have to wait before some man would have the sense to propose to her." Nor was she less gay at heart when Stilson was shown into her little drawing-room, although she kept it out of her face—Marguerite's departure might have been sad.

"I saw it in the *Herald*," she began.

"Then I needn't tell you." He seemed old and worn and gray—nearer fifty than thirty-five. "I've come to say good-bye."

Emily looked at him, stupefied. They sat in silence a long time. At last he spoke: "I may be gone—who can say how long? Perhaps it will be

best to keep her over there. I don't know—I don't know," he ended drearily.

Again there was a long silence. She broke it: "You—are—going—to—to join her?" She could hardly force the words from her lips.

He looked at her in surprise. "Of course. What else can I do?"

Emily sank back in her chair and covered her face.

"What is it?" he asked. "What did you—why, you didn't think I would desert her?"

"Oh—I—" She put her face down into the bend of her arm. "I didn't—think—you'd desert *me*," she murmured. "I—I didn't understand." She faced him with a swift movement. "How can you go?" she exclaimed. "When fate clears the way for you—when this woman who had been hanging like a great weight about your neck suddenly cuts herself loose—then—Oh, how can you? Am I nothing in your life? Is my happiness nothing to you? Have you been deceiving yourself about her and—and me?" She turned away again. "I don't know what I'm saying," she said brokenly. "I don't mean to reproach you—only—I had—I had hoped—That's all."

The French clock on the mantel raised its swift little voice until the room seemed to be resounding with a clamorous reminder of flying time and flying youth and dying hope. When he spoke, his voice came as if from a great distance and out of a great silence and calm.

"It has been eleven years," he said, "since in folly and ignorance I threw myself into the depths—how deep you will never know, you can never imagine. And as I lay there, a thing so vile that all who knew me shrank from me with loathing—*she* came. And she not only came, but she staid. She did her best to lift me. She staid until I drove her away with curses and—and blows. But she came again—and again. And at last she brought the—the little girl——"

He paused to steady his voice. "And I took the hand of the child and she held its other hand, and together we found the way back—for me. And now—she has gone out among strangers—enemies—gone with her mind all awry. She will be robbed, abused, abandoned, she will suffer cold and hunger, and she will die miserably—if I don't go to her."

He went over and stood beside her. "Look at me!" he commanded, and she obeyed. "Low as the depth was from which she brought me up, it would be high as heaven in comparison with the depth I'd lie in, if I did not go. And I say to you that if you gave me the choice, told me you would cut me off from you forever if I went—I say to you that still I would go!"

As she faced him, her breath came fast and her eyes seemed to widen until all of her except them was blotted out for him. "I understand," she said. "Yes—you would go—nothing could hold you. And—that's why I—love you."

He gave a long sigh of relief and joy. "I had thought you would say that, when I knew what I must do. And then—when you protested—I was afraid. Everything crumbles in my hands. Even my dreams die aborning."

"When do you sail?" she asked. "To-morrow?"

"Yes. I've arranged my affairs. I—I look to you to take care of Mary. There is no one else to do it."

"If there were, no one else should do it," she said, with a gentle smile.

He gave her a slip of paper on which were the necessary memoranda. "And now—I must be off." He tried to make his tone calm and business-like. He put out his hand and, when she gave him hers, he held it. For an instant each saw into the depths of the other's heart.

"No matter how long you may be away," she said in a low voice, "remember, I shall be—" She did not finish in words.

He tried to speak, but could not. He turned and was almost at the door before he stopped and came back to her. He took her in his arms, and she could feel his heart beating as if it were trying to burst through his chest. "No matter how long," she murmured. "And I shall not be impatient, my love."

* * * * * * *

She expected a reaction but none came. Instead, she continued to feel a puzzling tranquillity. She had never loved him so intensely, yet she was

braving serenely this separation full of uncertainties. She tried to explain it to herself, and finally there came to her a phrase which she had often heard years ago at church—"the peace that passeth all understanding."

"This must be what they meant by it," she said to herself. "Our love is my religion."

The next time she was at Joan's they were not together long before Joan saw that there had been a marvellous change in her. "What is it?" she asked. "Has the tangle straightened?"

"No," replied Emily. "It is worse, if anything. But I have made a new discovery. I have found the secret of happiness."

"Love?"

Emily shook her head. "That's only part of it."

"Self-sacrifice?"

"I shouldn't call it sacrifice." Emily's face was more beautiful than Joan had ever before seen it. "I think the true name is—self forgotten for love's sake."

"Yes," assented Joan, looking with expanding eyes at the baby-boy playing on the floor at her feet.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LIGHT.

AFTER a long and baffling search up and down through western Europe he learned that Courtleigh had robbed her and deserted her, and that she was alone, under the name of Mrs. Brandon, at a tiny house in Craven street near the Strand. He lifted and dropped its knocker, and a maid-of-all-work thrust through a crack in the door, her huge be-frowzled head with its thin hair drawn out at the back over a big wire-frame.

"How is Mrs. Brandon?" he said.

"Not so well, thank you, sir," replied the maid, looking at him as suspiciously as her respect for the upper classes permitted.

"I wish to see the landlady."

She instantly appeared, thrusting the maid aside and releasing a rush of musty air as she opened the door wide. She was fairly trembling with curiosity.

"I am Mrs. Brandon's—next friend," he said, remembering and using the phrase which in his reporter days he had often seen on the hospital entry-cards. "I am the guardian of her child. I've come to see what can be done for her."

His determined, commanding tone and manner,

and his appearance of prosperity, convinced Mrs. Clocker. "We've done all we could, sir. But the poor lady is in great straits, sir. She's been most unfortunate."

"Is there a physician?"

"Doctor Wackle, just up the way, sir."

"Send for him at once. May I see her?"

The maid set off up the street and Stilson climbed a dingy first flight, a dingier second flight, and came to a low door which sagged far from its frame at the top. He entered softly—"She's asleep, sir," whispered Mrs. Clocker.

It was a miserable room where the last serious attempts to fight decay had been made perhaps half a century before. It now presented queer contrasts—ragged and tottering furniture strewn with handsome garments; silk and lace and chiffon and embroidery, the latest Paris devisings, crumpled and tossed about upon patch and stain and ruin; several extravagant hats and many handsome toilet-articles of silver and gold and cut glass spread in a fantastic jumble upon the dirty coverings of a dressing-table and a stand. Against the pillow—its case was neither new nor clean—lay the head of Marguerite. Her face was ugly with wrinkles and hollows, that displayed in every light and shade a skin shiny with sweat, and bluish yellow. Her hair was a matted mass from which had rusted the chemicals put on to hide the streaks of gray. She was in a stupor and was breathing quickly and heavily.

He had come, filled with pity and even eager to see her. He was ashamed of the repulsion which swept through him. Her face recalled all that was horrible in the past, foreboded new and greater horrors. He turned away and left the room. His millstone was once more suspended from his neck.

Dr. Wackle had come—a shabby, young-old man with thin black whiskers and damp, weak lips. In a manner that was a cringing apology for his own existence, he explained that Marguerite had pneumonia—that she was dangerously ill. He had given her up, but the prospect of payment galvanised hope. "There is a chance, sir," he said. "And with——"

"What is the name and address of the best specialist in lung diseases?" he interrupted.

"There's Doctor Farquhar in Half Moon Street, sir. He 'as been called by the royal family, sir."

"Take a cab and bring him at once."

While Wackle was away, Stilson arranged Marguerite's account with the landlady and had some of his belongings brought from the Carlton and put into the vacant suite just under Marguerite's. After two hours Dr. Farquhar came; at his heels Wackle, humble but triumphant. Stilson saw at one sharp glance that here was a man who knew his trade—and regarded it as a trade.

"What is your consultation fee?"

Dr. Farquhar's suspicious face relaxed. "Five guineas," he said, looking the picture of an English middle-class trader.

Stilson gave him the money. He carefully placed the five-pound note in his pocket-book and the five shillings in his change-purse. "Let me see the patient," he said, resuming the manner of the small soul striving to play the part of "great man." Stilson led the way to the sagged, hand-grimed door. Farquhar opened it and entered. "This foul air is enough to cause death by itself," he said with a sneering glance at Wackle. "No—let the window alone!"—this to Wackle in the tone a brutal master would use to his dog.

Wackle stood as if petrified and Farquhar went to the head of the bed. Marguerite opened her eyes and closed them without seeing anything. He laid his hand upon her forehead, then flung away the covers and listened at her chest. "Umph!" he grunted and with powerful hands lifted her by the shoulders. Grasping her still more firmly he shook her roughly. Again he listened at her chest. "Umph!" he growled. He looked into her face which was now livid, then shook her savagely and listened again. He let her drop back against the pillows and tossed the covers over her. He took up his hat which lay upon a silk-and-lace dressing gown spread across the foot of the bed. He stalked from the room.

"Well?" said Stilson, when they were in the hall.

The great specialist shrugged his shoulders. "She may last ten hours—but I doubt it. I can do nothing. Good day, sir." And he jerked his head and went away.

Stilson stood in the little hall—Wackle, the landlady and the maid-of-all-work a respectful group a few feet away. His glance wandered helplessly round, and there was something in his expression that made Wackle feel for his handkerchief and Mrs. Clocker and the maid burst into tears. Stilson went stolidly back to Marguerite's room. He paused at the door, turned and descended. "Can you stay?" he said to Wackle. "I will pay you."

"Gladly, sir. I'll wait here with Mrs. Clocker."

Stilson reascended, entered the room and again stood beside Marguerite. With gentle hands he arranged her pillow and the covers. Then he seated himself. An hour—two hours passed—he was not thinking or feeling; he was simply waiting. A stir in the bed roused him. "Who is there?" came in Marguerite's voice, faintly. "Is it some one? or am I left all alone?"

"What can I do, Marguerite?" Stilson bent over her.

She opened her eyes, without surprise, almost without interest. "You?" she said. "Now they won't dare neglect me."

Her eyelids fell wearily. Without lifting them she went on: "How did you find me? Never mind. Don't tell me. I'm so tired—too tired to listen."

"Are you in pain?" he asked.

"No—the cough seems to be gone. I'm not going to get well—am I?" She asked as if she did not care to hear the answer.

He sat on the edge of the bed and gently stroked her forehead. She smiled and looked at him gratefully. "I feel so—so safe," she said. "It is good to have you here. But—oh, I'm so, so tired. I want to rest—and rest—and rest."

"I'll sit here." He took her hand. "You may go to sleep. I'll not leave you."

"I know you won't. You always do what you say you'll do." She ended sleepily and her breath came in swift, heavy sighs with a rattling in the throat. But she soon woke again. "I'm tired," she said. "Something—I guess it's life—seems to be oozing out of my veins. I'm so tired, but so comfortable. I feel as if I were going to sleep and nobody, nothing would ever, ever wake me."

He thought she was once more asleep, until she said suddenly: "I was going to write it, but my head whirled so—he stole everything but some notes I had in my stocking. But I don't care now. I don't forgive him—I just don't care. What was I saying—yes—about—about Mary. She's yours as well as mine, Robert—really, truly, yours. I made you doubt—because—I don't know—partly because I thought you'd be better off without us—then, afterward, I didn't want you to care any more for her than you did. You believe me, Robert?"

He nodded. "Yes," he said, "I believe you."

"And you forgive me?"

"There's nothing to forgive—nothing."

"It doesn't matter. I only want to rest and

stop thinking—and—and—everything. Will it be long?"

"Not long," he said in a choked undertone.

Presently she coughed and a black fluid oozed hideously from her lips and seemed to be threatening to strangle her. He called the doctor who gave her an opiate.

"Come with me, sir," said Wackle in a hoarse, sick-room whisper, "Mrs. Clocker has spread a nice cold lunch for you."

Stilson waved him away. Alone again, he swept the finery from the sofa and stretched himself there. Trivial thoughts raced through his burning brain—the height and width of the candle flames, the pattern of the wall paper, the tracery of cracks in the ceiling, the number of yards of lace and of goods in the dresses heaped on the floor. As his thoughts flew from trifle to trifle, his head ached fiercely and his skin felt as if it were baking and cracking.

Then came a long sigh and a rattling in the throat from the woman in the bed. He started up. "Marguerite!" he called. He looked down at her. She sighed again, stretched herself at full length, settled her head into the pillow. "Marguerite," he said. And he bent over her. "Are you there?" he whispered. But he knew that she was not.

He took the candle from the night stand and held it above his head. The dim flame made his living face old and sorrow-seamed, while her dead

face looked smooth, almost young. Her expression of rest, of peaceful dreams, of care forever fled, brought back to him a far scene. He could hear the crash of the orchestra, the stirring rhythm of a Spanish dance; he could see the stage of the Gold and Glory as he had first seen it—the bright background of slender, girlish faces and forms; and in the foreground, slenderest and most girlish of all, Marguerite—the embodiment of the motion and music of the dance, the epitome of the swift-pulsing life of the senses.

He knelt down beside the bed and took her dead hand. "Good-bye, Rita," he sobbed. "Good-bye, good-bye!"

* * * * * * *

Suddenly the day broke and the birds in the eaves began to chirp, to twitter, to sing. He rose, and with the sombre and clinging shadows of the past and the present there was mingled a light—faint, evasive, as yet itself a shadow. But it was light—the forerunner of the dawn of a new day upon a new land where his heart should sing as in the days of his youth.

THE END.

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